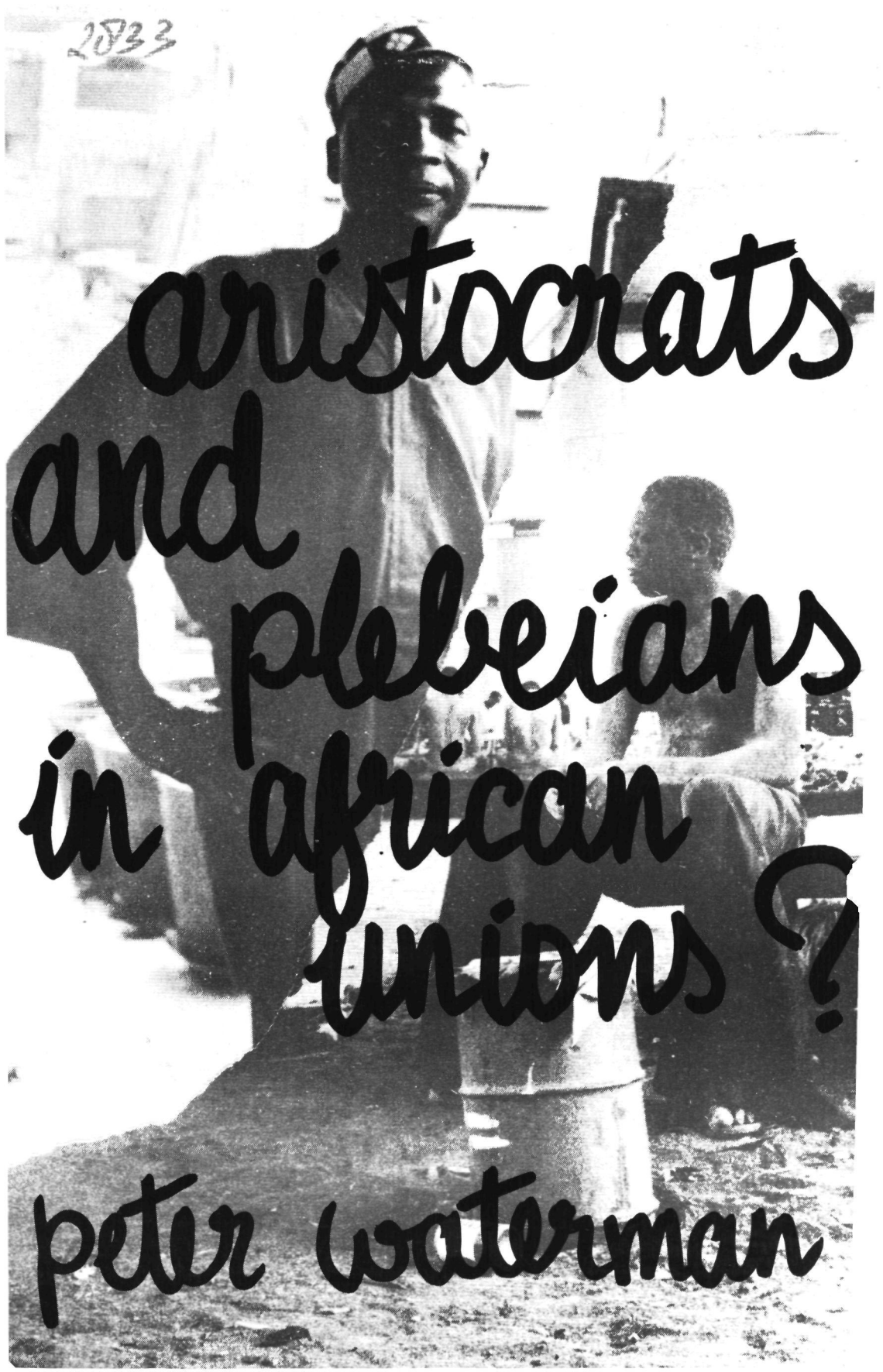

# aristocrats and plebeians in african unions?

peter waterman

# ARISTOCRATS AND PLEBEIANS IN AFRICAN TRADE UNIONS?
# LAGOS PORT AND DOCK WORKER ORGANISATION AND STRUGGLE

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# LAGOS PORT AND DOCK WORKER ORGANISATION AND STRUGGLE

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## FOREWORD

At one level this is a straightforward and not-too-complex account of political divisions between and amongst 'rich' and 'poor' workers in the cargo-handling industry of Lagos, Nigeria. The descriptive and historical chapters (1-3, 6-7, 10-11, and 14-15) can thus be read by the motivated and primary-educated labour activist, whether in Nigeria or elsewhere.

At another level it is an analysis or interpretation of such divisions, making use of a wide range of recent marxist and radical literature that has attempted to come to terms with the problem of division amongst workers and their organisations, and with the specificity of working-class formation in peripheral capitalist societies. The theoretical and analytical chapters (4, 5, 8, 9, 12, 13, 16) can be read by those familiar with the language of social science (or marxism) and interested in the analysis of this problem, whether in Nigeria or elsewhere.

At a third level it is part of a theoretical and political debate amongst marxists (and other radicals) concerning the working class, the labour movement and the struggle for socialism. This debate (mostly in the Introduction and Conclusion) should be of particular interest to those in Nigeria, Africa or elsewhere concerned with furthering popular struggles against an increasingly militarised, unequal, hierarchical and competitive world order. Although more complex than the descriptive/historical material, I would expect self-educated labour leaders, as well as formally-trained intellectuals, to be interested in this material.

The same material is also part of my own political struggle to come to terms with the marxist tradition - a struggle by no means completed with this book. Thus, I began by rejecting labour aristocracy theory as a crude over-simplification of the classical marxist approach to the working class. I then cast around for a richer and finer set of concepts within the marxist tradition. But, in applying and reflecting on these concepts, I began to realise that labour aristocracy theory was not so much a deviation from orthodox marxism as an expression of a major shortcoming within it. In the Conclusion I attempt to come to terms with this both theoretically and politically.

I hope that the whole will be as educative to the reader as it has been to me.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I produced this work whilst a staff member of the Institute of Social Studies in the Hague. For a whole decade I have enjoyed the tolerance and active encouragement of other staff, as well as benefitting from the generous financial support of the ISS to the costs of the research and its by-products.

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I would like to give credit to those union activists who, often against great odds and without any support except that from below, played a radicalising role amongst Lagos Port workers in the 1970s. Amongst dockworkers I got much help from Reuben Lazarus, Z.O. Adenekan, Michael Coker, H.I. Wolseley and others. Amongst NPA workers, Okeke Ugwuanyi (an ISS student 1977-78) was of great assistance. Amongst radical union leaders at national level, Sylvester Ejiofoh (an ISS student 1975-76) has been a dependable source of information and ideas for some 15 years. Such veteran unionists as O. Zudonu, A.E. Okon and Jonas Abam were also of invaluable assistance.

News and newsclippings were supplied systematically for one year by Jola Ogunlusi. Assistance with interviews was provided by Baldwin Onuiri. Three labour relations practitioners gave me special access to documentation: Chief O.A.F. Beyioku, U.U. Nkamare and Solomon Adun. Dozens of activists and workers provided thoughtful and courteous answers to my questions.

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Without the encouragement, advice and supervision of staff of the Third World Centre of the Catholic University of Nijmegen, this dissertation might have remained uncompleted. The emancipatory motivation and action orientation of the centre was of considerable encouragement to me whilst I was re-writing my draft to meet its demands. If my study has ensured the addition of industrial workers to the emancipatory forces previously studied by the centre that will be reward enough.

Neither Ray (mother), Ruthie (wife, comrade and friend), Danny or Tamara (children) typed, clipped, filed, read for me, nor tiptoed whilst I worked. Instead they carried on with their own work, loves, and struggles. I was thus - sometimes amusingly, sometimes painfully - reminded that it was not enough to make a career and enunciate socialist principles. I often felt I was going through the same test of my human qualities at home as of my professional ones at work and my political ones in a wider arena. This is as it should be and I thank them for it.

This manuscript was typed at my request in a special style and format. Typing was in the hands of Jane Wild, Karen Shaw, Beryl Morphet, Charles Meivogel and - in particular - Barbara McDonald. How they retain their sanity, intelligence, motivation and sense of humour when faced eight hours per day by the screen of the word processor I do not know, but I consider it a privilege and pleasure to have worked with them.

None of the above will, of course, receive such credit as this work might eventually be accorded. But, then, none of them will have to bear any discredit for such facile assumptions, unsupported assertions, errors, inconsistencies and repetitions as might remain!

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## NOTE ON REFERENCES AND SOURCES

Authors are given as: (Ananaba 1969:53). Organisational and institutional publications and documents are mostly given as: (NPAWU Rules and Regulations 1961), (FMG Comments 1971:36). However, where more precise reference to government documents is considered necessary they have been given abbreviated titles as in (Labour Report 1951). Where there is a multi-volume document, as in submissions to, or reports on, commissions, these are recorded as: (Beckley Submissions 1967:No. 158:2), or (Adebiyi Proceedings 1976:14:36), with the second set of figures referring to the part or volume, the third to page number. Letters, and documents submitted in letter form, are recorded thus: (NMTUF to Beyioku, June 14, 1960), (MFSU Submission to Ani Commission 1966). Minutes, memoranda and agreements involving more than one body may be recorded with any of the parties primary - usually the one from which it was obtained: (NPA-R&PT& CSU Minutes, January 26, 1963), or (R&PT&CSU-NPA-NMTUF Agreement, January 27, 1963). Where an informed guess can be made at the origins or dating of dubious materials, this is done: (NPA(?) Dockworkers 1966(?)). Interview notes and personal communications are recorded as such and are unlisted. Undated items are recorded as (Emejulu n.d.), forthcoming publications as (Lubeck f.c.). Where continued reference is necessary to a cited item, this may be recorded as (Cohen 1969:73), followed by (86), (33), etc. The bibliography to this work excludes some memoranda, letters, minutes, etc., referred to in the text. The textual references are, however, still of value since the source materials for this study are now available in microfiche form. These are Items 1-5 listed in Appendix 4. They are available under the collective title 'Nigerian Labour Studies on Microfiche' from Interdocumentation Co., Poststrasse 14, 3600 Zug, Switzerland.

## NOTE ON CURRENCY

Nigeria decimalised its currency in 1973. The old Nigerian pound (£N) was replaced by two naira (N), consisting of 100 kobo (K). The Nigerian pound was tied to the British one in colonial times. the value of Nigerian currency at various dates since independence has been as follows:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1962 | £N1 | $2.80 |
| 1971 | £N1 | $2.80 |
| 1974 | N1 | $1.59 |
| 1977 | N1 | $1.55 |

## ABBREVIATIONS

Abbrevations are spelled out on first use in the text. However, the nature of this work makes it inevitable that there will be a large number of these and that readers will need to prompt their memories. A complete listing of abbreviations will be found below. For portworker and dockworker unions, readers may find it more convenient to refer to Table 6.1 and Figure 6.1 (portworker organisations), and to Table 7.1 (dockworker organisations).

| | |
|---|---|
| AALC | African-American Labour Centre |
| ADU | Akere Dockworkers Union |
| ADWT&GWU | Amalgamated Dockworkers Transport and General Workers Union |
| ADWT&GWU(N) | ADWT&GWU (Nigerian Trade Union Congress Affiliated) |
| ADWT&GWU(U) | ADWT&GWU (United Labour Congress Affiliated) |
| ADWU | Asajoquan Dockworkers Union |
| ADWUofN&C | Amalgamated Dockworkers Union of Nigeria and the Cameroons |
| AFL-CIO | American Federation of Labour-Congress of Industrial Organisations |
| AFRO | African Regional Organisation (of the ICFTU) |
| ANDLC | Association of Nigerian Dock Labour Contractors |
| BDWU | Bakare Dockworkers Union |
| BWU | Biney Workers Union |
| BSA | Biney Staff Association |
| CCSLU | Customs Casual Shipping Labour Union |
| CIA | Central Intelligence Agency (USA) |
| CFAO | Compagnie Francaise d'Afrique Occidentale |
| FGT&GWU | Firemen, Greasers, Technical and General Workers Union |
| FRN | Federal Republic of Nigeria |
| GM | General Manager |
| IAP | Industrial Arbitration Panel |
| IAT | Industrial Arbitration Tribunal |
| ICFTU | International Confederation of Free Trade Unions |
| IFCTU | International Federation of Christian Trade Unions |
| ILO | International Labour Organisation |
| ITF | International Transportworkers Federation |
| JCR | Joint Committee for Representation |
| LUF | Labour Unity Front |
| MESAN | Marine Engineering Staff Association of Nigeria |
| MRA | Moral Rearmament |
| NBSPSWU | Nigerian Boardship Port Security Workers Union |

| | |
|---|---|
| NECA | Nigerian Employers Consultative Association |
| NLC | Nigerian Labour Congress |
| NLP | Nigerian Labour Party |
| NMAWU | Nigerian Marine African Workers Union |
| NMTUF | Nigerian Maritime Trade Unions Federation |
| NMWU | Nigerian Maritime Workers Union |
| NPA | Nigerian Ports Authority |
| NPAC&AWU | NPA Craftsmen and Allied Workers Union |
| NPAFSA | NPA Fire Service Association |
| NPAJSSAN | NPA Junior Supervisory Staffs Association of Nigeria |
| NPAWU | NPA Workers Union |
| NPF | National Provident Fund |
| NRC | Nigerian Railways Corporation |
| NSAWU | Nigerian Stevedoring African Workers Union |
| NS&DWU | Nigerian Stevedores and Dockworkers Union |
| NTUC | Nigerian Trade Union Congress |
| NWC | Nigerian Workers Council |
| OATUU | Organisation of African Trade Union Unity |
| PLO | Port Labour Office(r) |
| R&PTSU | Railways and Ports Transport Staffs Union |
| R&PT&CSU | Railways and Ports Transport and Clerical Staffs Union |
| R&PWUN | Railways and Ports Workers Union of Nigeria |
| TNC | Transnational Company |
| TUC | Trades Union Congress (U.K.) |
| TUI | Trade Union International (WFTU Affiliated) |
| ULC | United Labour Congress |
| UTC | Union of Tally Clerks of Nigeria |
| WFTU | World Federation of Trade Unions |

# INTRODUCTION

This is a study of political divisions between 'rich' and 'poor' workers in the Lagos cargo-handling industry. It is situated within a particular debate amongst radical scholars working on labouring people in Africa. And this debate itself relates to an older and more fundamental one, going back to the beginning of marxism itself. Section 1 considers this background. Section 2 deals with the African debate. Section 3 introduces the case itself. Section 4 places this in the context of Nigerian labour studies. Section 5 presents the general approach adopted. Section 6 deals with research strategy and techniques. And Section 7 presents the structure of the rest of the work.

## 1. Handling non-revolutionary behaviour amongst workers

> Of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie today, the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class. The other classes decay and finally disappear in the face of modern industry; the proletariat is its special and essential product ... All previous historical movements were movements of minorities, or in the interest of minorities. The proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority ... The advance of industry, whose involuntary promoter is the bourgeoisie, replaces the isolation of the labourers, due to competition, by their revolutionary combination due to association. The development of modern industry, therefore, cuts from under its feet the very foundation on which the bourgeoisie produces and appropriates products. What the bourgeoisie therefore produces, above all, are its own gravediggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable. (Marx 1935:216-8).

The above extracts from the Communist Manifesto of 1848

are still articles of faith for most radical socialist movements today. They are also a major source of problems for both movements and theorists. Why has the bourgeoisie not yet been buried? Is the proletariat really revolutionary? Do other classes finally disappear? What if the proletariat is a minority? And acts in its own interest? It might be considered unfair to pose such questions of a merely agitational pamphlet, and one written before Marx had reached intellectual maturity. But such questions were posed - at least implicitly - by Marx, Engels and Lenin themselves. And, as we will see in the Conclusion to this study, such questions are being explicitly raised by committed socialists and thoughtful social scientists still today.

Marx, Engels and Lenin considered the physical expansion and political consolidation of the proletariat equally inevitable. When they found the working class to be non-revolutionary, they explained this largely in terms of its domination by a 'labour aristocracy'.[1]

The expression 'labour aristocracy' is not of marxist origin. It was one current in mid- and late-19th century Britain, being applied to the highly-skilled and (consequently) strongly-unionised stratum of the working class (Hobsbawm 1964:272-343). In 1858 Engels referred to the English proletariat as 'becoming more and more bourgeois' (Marx and Engels 1953:491-2), and in 1892 to the skilled artisans in the 'great Trades Unions' as 'forming an aristocracy among the working class'. In the latter item Engels referred to the working class as a whole as having shared to some extent in the benefits of Britain's industrial monopoly, this explaining why 'since the dying-out of Owenism, there has been no Socialism in England' (28, 30-31). In a letter in 1889, during which the phrase 'aristocracy of labour' was specifically used for the first time, Engels referred also specifically to the 'bourgeois respectability' of the socialist leaders of the new and militant unskilled workers' unions (522-3).

Lenin picked up and developed this notion during the First World War. Explaining the reformism and nationalism of the majority of European labour movements faced by the war, he argued that a

> privileged upper stratum of the proletariat in the imperialist countries lives partly at the expense of hundreds of millions of members of uncivilised nations. (Lenin 1959: 312).

In Lenin's presentation (321-4), both economic and political mechanisms are at work:

1) Colonial super-profits make it possible to bribe

> labour ministers, 'labour representatives' ... labour officials, workers belonging to the narrow craft unions, office employees, etc...

2) Parliamentary democracy makes it necessary that 'political privileges and sops' are granted, such as

> Lucrative and soft jobs in the Cabinet, in Parliament and on diverse committees, on the editorial staffs of 'substantial', legally published newspapers or on the management councils of no less substantial 'bourgeois-serving' trade unions...

and that there be issued

> all sort of reforms and blessings to the workers...fairly large-sized sops for obedient workers in the form of social reforms (insurance, etc.)...

Thus, labour aristocrats could apparently be either the working class as a whole, a section of the working class proper (skilled artisans), other sorts of wage-earners (clerks), members of certain unions, or trade union and other labour leaders. Furthermore, the concept could be used to explain conservatism both in a working class and of a working class. Since Lenin the term has repeatedly been used in these varied ways and for these different purposes, when discussing the European and American working-class or labour movements (Nicolaus 1970; Hobsbawm 1970; Poulantzas 1973). It has also been employed explicitly or implicitly in discussing conservatism or self-interest amongst workers at the periphery of capitalism (Harris 1970; NACLA 1973; Breman 1976:10-12; Leitner 1977:101; Cox 1977: 391; Malaba 1980:25-6).

If the labour aristocracy forms a problematic top layer to a national or international working class, there is also for marxists a problematic bottom layer, the 'lumpenproletariat'.[2] Lumpen, in German, literally means 'rag, tatter', and the term could therefore be translated as 'ragged proletariat'. But a lump, in German, is also a 'rascal, blackguard', and translations are more often in terms of 'rascally' (Post 1978:150) or 'loafer-proletariat' (Bukharin and Preobrazhensky 1969:99). The Communist Manifesto again uses a popular 19th century term, speaking of the 'dangerous class', described as 'the social scum, that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of old society' (Marx 1935:216). The social characteristics of this category are filled in in Marx's Eighteenth Brumaire and Class Struggles in France. But

in both cases the image is solely one of the 18th century pre-industrial city poor 'sharply differentiated from the industrial proletariat' (Marx and Engels 1951:142). However, in Capital, Marx treats this category within the context of an analysis of the 'relative surplus population' created and required by the development of industrial capitalism. Here he identifies the lumpenproletariat much more narrowly. Having distinguished a pauper stratum from the floating, latent and stagnant layers above it, he distinguishes within the pauper stratum itself between the 'actual lumpenproletariat' of vagabonds, criminals and prostitutes and three other categories of paupers (Marx 1976:797).

If Marx, in Capital, made such fine distinctions between categories of the urban poor, none such were made when talking of their political behaviour. Here 'lumpenproletariat' appears a more general category for those on or beyond the periphery of urban wage labour. The Communist Manifesto says that the dangerous class

> may, here and there, be swept into the movement by a proletarian revolution; its conditions of life, however, prepare it far more for the part of a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue. (Marx 1935:216).

The Class Struggles in France speaks of it as

> at the youthful age...thoroughly malleable, as capable of the most heroic deeds and the most exalted sacrifices as of the basest banditry and the foulest corruption. (Marx and Engels 1951:216).

So far we have an image of a manipulable mass, available to either the proletariat or its enemies. But, in another communist classic, The ABC of Communism, it is actually given its own ideology and ideologists. A distinction is made between the ideology of the proletariat - proletarian communism or socialism - and that of the lumpen proletariat - 'lumpenproletarian socialism' or 'anarchism'. The Russian anarchists, it is said, do not

> represent the interests and aspirations of the working class; they represent those of what is termed the lumpenproletariat, the loafer proletariat; they represent the interests of those who live in bad conditions under capitalism, but who are quite incapable of independent creative work. (Bukharin and Preobrazhensky 1969:122).

The precise structure, ideology and political role of the urban poor has remained a problem for socialist

activists and theorists. Indeed, it has become a greater problem than it was for the classical marxists. This is not only because of the relatively small proportion that the proletariat represents within the cities of the capitalist periphery. It is also because of its general refusal to play its required role both here and within the centres of world capitalist industrial development. There have, thus, been repeated attempts to conceptualise the urban poor of peripheral cities in the classical marxist terms, but also to consider whether it's positive capacities ('heroic deeds and most exalted sacrifices') do not outweigh its generally recognised negative ones (Fanon 1967; Allen 1970; Worsley 1972; Cohen and Michael 1973; Franklin 1970; Post 1978). As Post, who has made an extensive and sensitive attempt at concrete analysis of this category in marxist terms, says:

> The class position of the lumpenproletariat has remained a problem for both marxist and non-marxist writers. (Post 1978:149).

He continues:

> The whole question is made even more complex when we turn to the consciousness and political action of the lumpenproletariat. There are passages in Marx's work, indeed, which seem to indicate that he thought of the category 'lumpen'...as a potentiality for all classes, as when he spoke of such elements in the peasantry and bourgeoisie, and apparently linked this with a failure to act in accord with the expected 'true' historical role of one's class. (150).

This is both revealing of the looseness of the category and suggestive of a mode of operation common to the previous one. First the 'true' role of the class is indentified, then behaviour which deviates from this is identified in terms of peripheral economic categories.

If we can conceive of the labour aristocracy as a problematic layer above the 'really revolutionary' proletariat, and of the lumpenproletariat as a problematic layer beneath it, we can possibly conceive of the 'semi-proletarianised peasantry' as a - perhaps slightly less problematic - category beside it. The category may have been used in discussion of class struggle by earlier marxists, but the best-known use is in Lenin. Although the term is never precisely defined and its proportions never clearly indicated, what Lenin is concerned with is primarily the process of rural proletarianisation and the political role of those being proletarianised. Occasionally, however, he also shows awareness of the problem of the recently or peripherally-urbanised worker. Himself discussing

rural proletarianisation, he asks:

> Who works on the building of railways? Who is fleeced by the contractors? Who does the unskilled work in the towns and the ports? It is always the rural poor, the peasants who have no horses or only one each...(Lenin 1976:46).

Lenin also recognises another aspect of semi-proletarianisation when he cites a letter from Moscow District comrades in 1905:

> 'the overwhelming majority of our "proletariat" have not yet become divorced from the land...A weaver employed in a mill hires a labourer to till his patch of land. His wife (if she is not working at the mill), his children, and the ages and invalid members of the family work on this same piece of land, and he himself will work on it when he becomes old or maimed, or is discharged for violent or suspicious behaviour.' (123-4).

The consciousness and political behaviour of such labourers is also to be found in the cited letter:

> '...such "proletarians" can hardly be called proletarians. Their economic status is that of paupers; their ideology is that of petty bourgeois. They are ignorant and conservative. It is from such that Black-Hundred elements are recruited.' (123-4).

If Lenin here recognises the appeal of the police-backed, monarchist and anti-semitic terrorists to these people, he also recognises that they could be curious about and sympathetic to the struggles of the workers (18). In terms of revolutionary strategy, moreover, he presents them primarily as allies of the proletariat:

> ...the proletariat must accomplish the socialist revolution, allying to itself the mass of the semi-proletarian elements of the population so as to...paralyse the instability of the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie. (119-20. Original stress).

After the 1917 Revolution, Lenin was faced by the reluctance of the peasantry to deliver such little grain as it had to cities that had nothing to give in return. He proposed that 'iron detachments' (245-52) of workers be dispatched to work with the semi-proletarianised peasants and force the rich ones to disgorge hoarded grain. But here he was forced to recognise, at least implicitly, the problem of the semi-proletarianised within the very heart of the

working class. Appealing to the Petrograd workers to take part in the grain crusade, he noted that even in the Putilov Works - the hearth of the Revolution - only 15,000 of the 40,000 workers were real proletarians. Famine and the breakdown of production had led the others to quit the factory. And he quoted a leader of the Putilov workers to the effect that 'the majority of them were "temporary" workers, not proletarians, an unreliable, flabby lot' (249).

Since Lenin, we have become used to the growth of rural pauperisation, to the continual growth and extension of casual and temporary labour, to migration - national and international, cyclical or longterm. This has again led to discussion of the revolutionary capacity of the semi-proletarianised peasantry, even if the term iself may be less employed and have gained less currency than the two previous ones (Petras 1978; Omvedt 1980; 1981; Sengupta 1981).

For many contemporary marxists, 'the proletariat alone' remains the 'really revolutionary class'. Reformist, anarchist, conservative or downright reactionary behaviour amongst urban wage-earners is therefore frequently still explained in terms of the existence above, amongst, beside or beneath them of the labour aristocracy, the lumpenproletariat or the semi-proletarianised peasantry. The suggestion here is that if and when labour is truly and sufficiently proletarianised it will become really revolutionary. Others have adopted another conceptual solution. Considering the whole proletariat as a labour aristocracy, they seek revolutionary agency amongst the peasantry, the lumpenproletariat or the semi-proletarianised.[3]

Let us now move to Africa in the colonial and post-colonial period. Here we find Frantz Fanon, a revolutionary activist and theorist, drawing on marxist categories yet abandoning all faith in the proletariat, metropolitan or colonial. He was the first to treat the whole of Africa's tiny working class as a labour aristocracy and to seek revolutionary agency amongst the peasantry and (in the cities) amongst the mass of lumpens and the semi-proletarianised:

> In the colonial countries the working class has everything to lose; in reality it represents that fraction of the colonised nation which is necessary and irreplaceable if the colonial machine is to run smoothly: it includes the tram conductors, taxi drivers, miners, dockers, interpreters, nurses and so on. It is these elements which constitute also the 'bourgeois' fraction of the colonised people. (Fanon 1967:86).

Fanon recognised the capacity of the lumpenproletariat

to serve as 'hired soldiers side by side with the colonial troops' (109), but he also argued that

> The lumpenproletariat, that horde of starving men, uprooted from their tribe, and from their clan, constitutes one of the most spontaneous and most radically revolutionary forces of a colonised people...It is within this mass of humanity, this people of the shanty towns...that the revolution will find its urban spearhead. (103).

The fanonist argument was best developed by Giovanni Arrighi and John Saul (1973). Their separate or joint formulations and reformulations of this position led to a controversy known as the labour aristocracy debate, which this study attempts to both conclude and surpass.[4] But, before dealing with this debate, and situating my own work in relation to it, we should also note the continuities between the orthodox and unorthodox marxists here. This continuity lies not only in the use of marxist-leninist categories, nor only in the notion that labour aristocrats live 'at the expense of' the mass of labourers, but also in the search for one principle gravedigger of capitalism/imperialism (proletariat? lumpens? peasantry?), and one privileged graveyard (industrialised metropolis? (neo-) colonised periphery?). There are thus broader underlying issues to the debate, issues to which attention will later be drawn and to which we must return in the Conclusion.

## 2. Labour aristocrats and labour plebeians in Africa: an unfinished debate

Let us consider in turn the manner in which Arrighi and Saul conceptualised and used the terms 'labour aristocracy' and 'semi-proletarianised peasantry'.[5] They did not confine the first term to the regularly-employed industrial working class. Rather did they consider the 'proper proletariat' (1973:141) to be part of a more general labour aristocracy of the salaried in post-colonial Africa. Behind this assertion lie three interlinked assumptions about the fundamental structures and processes of capitalist accumulation in Africa. The first is the 'primacy of the contradiction between international capitalism on the one hand, and any given African territory on the other' (Saul 1975: 303). Connected with this is the notion of capital accumulation implying primarily the extraction of surplus from the periphery and its concentration in the metropolis (with peripheral societies having their own metropoles and peripheries at the bottom of the extractive funnel):

> One does in fact find the productive potential of African societies...constrained by

> the present pattern of world and domestic economy and society; the available surplus is ill utilised - drained away as the repatriated profits of overseas firms, or consumed by self-indulgent domestic elites ... On the domestic scene, one faces the problem of the relationship between 'town', the centre of administration and of such industrialisation as takes place, and 'country', an interaction...which all too often defines the split between unequal and unconnected spheres of a society falling short of genuine transformation. (1973-12).

Already implied in the above is the third element: the notion of fundamental dichotomies between 'traditional' and 'modern' sectors, peasant and industrial production, capital- and labour-intensive industry (13-20). Considering the impact of capitalism primarily at the level of exchange relations (surplus extraction), Arrighi and Saul see class formation primarily as functional to surplus extraction, finding a

> similarity, historically, between the structural position of the 'elites' (and 'subelites') in bureaucratic employment and of the wage workers, both supplying their labour-power to service imperial exploitation... (Saul 1975:304. Original stress).

They also considered that the 'proper proletariat' differed from the classical European one in its 'voluntary proletarianisation' and 'discretionary consumption' (1973:20). The fully-proletarianised worker, in other words, was someone who chose to cut off his rural ties, and who was also in a position to choose what to consume out of his high wages. The distinction between this wage-earner (incorporated into the modern industrial sector, serving surplus extraction, and attached to the local elites) and the others depends on a distinction between the needs of labour-intensive and capital-intensive industry. the first requires predominantly the combination of a few skilled with a mass of unskilled labour. The latter requires a combination of high-level and semi-skilled labour. The typical colonial enterprise in Africa, large or small, engaged in primary mineral or agricultural production, relied on labour-intensive techniques. It therefore required the mass of low-paid and unskilled labour provided by the migrant labour system. The typical post-colonial enterprise in Africa, however, is the capital-intensive import-substituting plant producing for consumption or the intermediate sector. This sort of industry requires semi-skilled labour which it can afford to grant relatively high wages, job security and modern labour relations. As a consequence, the 'main characteristics of the waged working class are: relatively static

numbers and rising incomes' (1973:117). This economic privilege is seen as leading to a

> consistency between the interests of international capitalism...the African elite, sub-elite and proletariat proper (i.e. excluding migrant labour) which we shall collectively refer to as the 'labour aristocracy' of Tropical Africa. (141. Original stress).

Out of the social community thus formed flows a common political conservatism:

> Even though the 'labour aristocracy' may not be opposed to state ownership and management of the means of production, it can be expected to resist that reallocation of the surplus on the part of the state which must be an essential component of the strategy for the transformation in the total situation of the societies of Tropical Africa. (142).[6]

This conservatism is not simply a matter of attitudes. Many of the

> best organised and articulate African trade unions have been, historically, those representing civil servants - the 'bureaucratic bourgeoisie' on the rise, as it were (1975: 309, f.n.7).

Not surprisingly,

> trade unions have come to encapsulate (quite) precisely the bargaining concerns of these strata in their most narrowly 'consumptionist' definition. The 'more-privileged' and better organised workers have been encouraged to identify upwards - to become partners (albeit the most junior of partners) in the jostling for surpluses among the internationally and domestically powerful... rather than to identify downwards with the even more 'wretched of the earth', the urban marginals and the average inhabitant of the untransformed rural areas. (1975:305. Original stress).

So much for the labour aristocracy. But behind any use of a labour aristocracy thesis is the suggestion that there exists somewhere - nationally or internationally - a majority of 'labour plebeians' who are at least potentially revolutionary and who are being held back from fulfilling the historical proletarian role by the conservatism of the aristocratic minority.

This other face of the thesis is made explicit by Arrighi and Saul with the concept of the 'semi-proletarianised peasantry' (1973:118). Having distinguished between the typical colonial and post-colonial enterprise, they note that unskilled, low-paid, migrant labour is to be found also within the labour-intensive operations subcontracted to local businessmen by the large-scale post-colonial enterprise (Arrighi and Saul 1973:128). Labourers in the latter sector are said to earn only a fraction of those in the former, and to be in a separate and non-competing labour market. Given the inability of the casual labourers to become fully proletarianised, it is felt reasonable to consider them as a part of the peasantry that participates in the wage economy through migration (69). Arrighi and Saul consider the role of the semi-proletarianised within the capitalist mode of production to give them a more rebellious attitude than the peasantry in general, even if such rebellion is liable to manipulation or collapse (82). They recognise, however, that precisely the lack of employment stability militates against the capacity to organise and protest (124). On the other hand they declare that such radical union action as has occurred in independent Tropical Africa 'may also reflect' the presence within the unions of the semi-proletarianised 'who retain strong links with the peasantry...and... interests antagonistic to the present order' (81). It is suggested that the contradiction between the interests of the aristocrats and the plebians within the unions has been occasionally overcome by certain labour leaders, who have been 'articulating the most aggressively radical philosophies on the continent'. And it is suggested that insofar as this occurs it may be due to such leaders' relative independence from the upper stratum of the working class and identification with the interests of the semi-proletarians (81).

The first response to Arrighi and Saul was in terms of an empirical refutation. Initially this refutation was addressed to the assertion that proper proletarians were labour aristocrats - i.e. rich, conservative, identified with international capital and national elites, opposed in attitude or behaviour to the rest of the poor. A new generation of radical and socialist researchers (Allen 1972; Hinchliffe 1974; Peace 1975; Jeffries 1975) produced convincing evidence to undermine the economic, social and political arguments of the labour aristocracy theorists. Much of the evidence are summarised in Waterman (1975:64-7): the urban-rural labour income gap are not widening; benefits to workers spilled over to urban petty-commodity producers/traders; values were shared between both urban sectors; unionised workers had been the most effective critics of elite wealth, corruption and authoritarianism. The evidence was largely accepted by John Saul (1975), leading him to considerably qualify (though not to abandon) his position. On the basis of

the new evidence there was created a new image of the African workers and their unions. The workers were now seen as emerging from the urban and rural poor, sharing both egalitarian and entrepreneurial values with them, and yet being able to play a leadership role amongst them precisely because of their position within capitalist industrial production. The unions were now seen as complex and multi-levelled organisations, playing an ambiguous role between the workers on the one hand and the employers and state on the other.

Whilst this group of researchers based themselves primarily on data concerning proper proletarians, Sandbrook and Arn (1977) explicitly addressed themselves to relations between these and the rest of the urban poor. Operating with a three-level index of political orientation - acquiescent, populist and class-conscious - they surveyed two popular urban settlements in Southern Ghana. In the course of a debate around their work, their findings were thus summarised:

> Nearly three-fifths of the employed workers in the sample expressed views which could be characterised as demonstrating either a populist or a class orientation. Those with a populist orientation were twice as numerous as those with a class orientation, as defined by the authors. The labour-aristocracy thesis was not supported by the interview data, since skilled workers were, on the whole, more likely than others to have a class orientation, and thereby constituted a politically conscious section of the emerging working class. Marx's European-based hypothesis that class consciousness increases with the scale of social production was supported, in that both skilled and unskilled workers in largescale industrial enterprises were more likely to have developed a class orientation than workers in small enterprises in the informal sector. Furthermore, the 'labouring poor' of <u>all</u> strata were more likely to develop a class orientation in a neighbourhood...comprised primarily of workers in large-scale enterprises, than in a neighbourhood...with a large proportion of petty traders, businessmen, white-collar workers and informal sector workers. In general, Muslim skilled and unskilled workers were less likely to voice a populist or class orientation than their non-Muslim counterparts. Finally, populist and class orientations tended to be more common among skilled and unskilled workers with more formal education. (Jorgensen 1977:113. Original stress).

This was in effect an empirical critique of the other half of the labour aristocracy thesis - that the semi-proletarianised peasantry are more radical than the proper proletariat. Sandbrook and Arn generalised from their findings to attack the simplistic notion behind the labour aristocracy thesis, that one could read off political attitudes from positions in an incomes heirarchy.

Although the empirical criticism demonstrated that the industrial proletariat as a whole was not a labour aristocracy, no case was made concerning other wage-earners, or unionists, or the conceptualisation of the problem. It was therefore still possible to explain the conservatism of the unionised workers in terms of aristocratic or privileged strata amongst the workers - clerks, state-sector employees, professional leaders (Woddis 1972:123; Allen 1972:76; Williams 1974; Peace 1975). It is thus necessary to consider the value of the crucial concepts in the debate, such as labour aristocracy, semi-proletarianised peasantry and conservatism.

One criticism of the labour aristocracy concept is in terms of its ambiguous referents:

> As in the classical marxist writings, participants in the debate have referred variously to 1) the regularly-employed industrial working class as a whole, 2) a stratum of skilled and better-paid manual workers, 3) clerks and other salary-earners, whose proletarian status is problematic, and 4) paid trade union officials, who cannot be considered as proletarian even if (as rare in Africa) they are drawn from the proletariat. (Waterman 1975:70-71).

On the basis of evidence from Britain, Hungary and Germany, Rosenberg (1976:11-12) demonstrates that it was frequently the most privileged workers who were the most radical. It is therefore reasonable to argue that the notion of the labour aristocracy is

> as useless analytically as it is striking metaphorically. It is useless analytically because it does not tell us the conditions that are necessary for certain attitudes or behaviour to exist. (Waterman 1976:183).

Criticism can also be made of the concept of the semi-proletarianised peasantry. Arrighi and Saul construct a category that includes two rather different types of unskilled labourer in two different periods (the cyclical migrant of the colonial period and the longterm urban casual labourer of the post-colonial one). It also excludes the regularly employed and

unionised, although even 'this stable work force remains only partially proletarianised' (Sandbrook 1981: 2), retaining extensive and crucial economic and cultural ties with the villages. There would also seem to be a contradiction between the asserted incapacity to organise and the capacity to develop movements of 'real menace'. Arrighi and Saul attempt to resolve this contradiction by suggesting that 1) union militancy is due to the presence of the semi-proletarianised within the unions, and 2) aggressively radical labour leadership comes from leaders who have separated themselves from the upper strata and identified themselves with the semi-proletarians. Apart from the speculative nature of this argument, no reason is given for why the relative ideological independence of labour leaders should lead them to identify with the semi-proletarians rather than with the labour aristocrats. In sum, this concept appears to be a logical category produced by negation, rather than a sociological one drawn from research and analysis.

In re-asserting the leading role of the industrial working class in social protest in tropical Africa, critics of the labour aristocracy thesis had recognised different kinds of radicalism. They had seen working-class radicalism as being of a 'populist' rather than a 'revolutionary' type (Jeffries 1975; Peace 1975; Sandbrook and Arn 1977). This was in itself subversive of simple oppositions and correlations such as those between the labour aristocracy (conservative or self-interested) and the semi-proletarianised (radical or rebelious). The concept of conservatism, however, had been considered unproblematic in the debate, the question rather being one of <u>who</u> was conservative. Yet, if one considers as conservative all ideas conservative of the existing social order in Africa (Waterman 1976: 160), then one would have to include not only the reformist idea of incremental change (which is what the labour aristocracy theorists were identifying) but also 'traditional' deference and clientalism, and the liberal idea of competitive individualism. These have different sources in popular experience, have different implications for mass expectations, and are differentially distributed amongst the urban labouring people. Insofar as this is so, any simple correlation between privilege (or deprival) and conservatism begs more questions than its answers.

The identification of numerous conceptual shortcomings leads to the question of whether there are not <u>methodological</u> ones underlying these. Two of these were partially recognised by Saul in his initial reply to the critics. The first was the manner in which 'despite its utility for many purposes' the concept of labour aristocracy could - like others - 'freeze a reality which is in flux' (Saul 1975:305). The second was the tendency to dichotomise,

> rather than to merely emphasise the placing of all workers - whatever the differences between them - on a continuum between urban and rural settings and identifications. (310, f.n.13).

We may extend and develop such criticism (as has Jeffries 1978:171-2, on the basis of a Ghanaian case study). Firstly, the simple division and opposition of any social process or structure would seem foreign to a dialectical approach to history and society. The particular process that Arrighi and Saul had taken upon themselves to so split was that of proletarianisation. The particular structure they had chosen to similarly split was that of the working class. The presentation of any social structure or process in terms of binary opposition discourages consideration of mutual interrelation and of the internal composition of each part. With respect to proletarianisation and the working class (or the labouring people more generally) such dichotomising would seem to better express what capital accumulation and state formation implies for labour, than how such labour experiences this and attempts to resist or overcome it. A critical social science (particularly a socialist one) would seem rather to need an approach that both expresses such labour experiences and facilitates such labour struggles.

Secondly, there is, underlying the concept of a labour aristocracy, an economic determination of consciousness. This is implied in the Sandbrook-Arn criticism. They criticise the crude correlation between higher income and greater conservatism. And they offer instead a correlation between proletarianisation (employment and residential) and radicalisation. This is, indeed, close to Marx's 'European-based hypothesis' and considerably more sophisticated than an income determinism. But it would seem to me to be a broader type of economic determinism that could be called class reductionist (i.e. reducing all contradictions in capitalist society to the worker-capitalist one). As suggested at the beginning of this chapter, Marx's European-based hypothesis has not been substantiated even in Europe. Rather than a re-assertion of Marx against Arrighi and Saul, it would seem to me that we need to recognise shortcomings common to both, and to surpass these. If proletarian radicalism in Africa can be restricted to 'militant economism' (Sandbrook 1975), and if popular conservatism is as ambiguous as I have above suggested, then any direct correlations between proletarianisation and radicalisation (or conservatism) are likely to be inadequate. If we can free ourselves of economic determinism, then we might also be free to investigate consciousness and behaviour within the working class, or among labouring people generally, in terms of its specificity rather than an assumed or

asserted superiority.

Just as these two points interconnect with each other, so do they with the following ones. It has already been suggested that the identification of a labour aristocracy and semi-proletarianised peasantry, and their placing in a binary opposition, is more a matter of assertion and speculation than of direct observation and analysis of the identified categories. This conceptualisation, in other words, is dependent on or required by some more general theory or model. This underlying model is, of course, that of dependency theory (Frank 1969), which sees capitalism primarily in terms of market relationships and its international development in terms of the core's extraction of surplus from the periphery. The key premises of this model are made explicit by Arrighi and Saul and have been set out at the beginning of this section. Such a model tends to reduce all relations and contradictions to functions of the surplus extraction process, and to see nations and classes as hierarchically arranged on the ladder between the poorest and the richest. As Peace (1975:283) says of the Arrighi-Saul model, exploitation occurs between the peasant mode and the capitalist mode of production rather than within the capitalist one. And, as Rosenberg (1976:34) points out, such a model tends to emphasise 'relations of distribution and wage forms over the relations of production'. It is, thus, excessive surplus consumption rather than exploitative class relations that are the obstacle to increased production, the 'discretionary consumption' (Arrighi and Saul 1973:20) of the labour aristocrats that brings them into conflict with the semi-proletarianised (Touray 1978). Once again, it is evident that labour aristocracy theory has a significance for social theory and socialist policies that goes beyond the immediate implications. If we do not recognise the methodological roots of the error then we will run the risk of reproducing it in new ways.[7]

One last area of criticism of the labour aristocracy theory before stating why it is nonetheless to be taken seriously. This is for its political implications. If the working class is conservative or self-interested, and the semi-proletarianised rebellious but unreliable, who is to initiate and guide change in a socialist direction? The answer seems to be progressive bureaucrats (reallocating the surplus from urban worker consumption to rural peasant production), 'revolutionary intellectuals'[8] (raising protest to the level of significantly revolutionary praxis), the progressive tendency within the petty-bourgeoisie (more radical than the workers and capable of mobilising them for socialism), and ideologically independent union leaders (capable of expressing the most radical philosophies on the continent). In class terms, this would seem to imply that the leading role in the building of

socialism is largely assigned to one or other fraction of the intermediate salaried strata: to the leading personnel of the state or to some kind of socialist intelligentsia or vanguard. Such a privileging of the progressive state and an intellectual vanguard in socialist struggle in Africa is a position Arrighi and Saul share with the 'proletarian messianists' they set out to criticise.[9] It also echoes the position of such convinced anti-socialist and elite theorists as Clark Kerr (Kerr et.al. 1973) who believed that the leading role in industrialisation would inevitably be played by such modernising elites as state bureaucrats or revolutionary intellectuals. To say this is not merely to assert an affinity but to identify a certain tradition amongst theorists of 'development' that cuts through distinctions between liberals and socialists, marxists and non-marxists (Gould 1979). This is not simply a theoretical affinity either. The argument of an opposition of interests between urban wage-earners and the peasantry was first articulated by colonial administrators (Peace 1975:282; Rosenberg 1976:10). And such arguments were being put forward forcefully by both conservative politicians and their intellectual supporters shortly after Independence in Africa (Waterman 1975:61-2). The most direct political connection, however, is between the position of Arrighi and Saul on the one hand and the Tanzanian state (Bienefeld 1975:245,250) and its consultants (Rosenberg 1976:12-14) on the other. Although not numbered amongst these, Arrighi and Saul both worked in and on Tanzania and believed in the progressive role of its state and intellectuals. Saul continued to do so even after the first major worker movement against the Tanzanian state in the early 1970s. Thus, even in extensively qualifying his labour aristocracy theory, Saul still argues that

> In Tanzania, struggle <u>within</u> the petty bourgeoisie and the attempt by the more progressive tendency within that stratum to (among other things) mobilise the workers and maximise the likelihood of their making a positive contribution to the country's move towards socialism has been, if anything, even more important than any pressure for radical solutions arising from the working class itself. (Saul 1975:307. Original stress).

In sum, there would seem to be a danger inherent in African labour aristocracy theory of encouraging bureaucrats and intellectuals to impose their development strategies or political perceptions on those most capable of resisting (the workers), in the name of those least capable of doing so (the semi-proletarianised and the peasantry).[8] If this would seem to be a severe commentary on this pair of socialist writers, then consider Brenner's conclusion on the dependency

school more generally. He argues that the consequence of the theory is to support political conclusions that its authors would certainly oppose:

> So long as incorporation into the world market/world division of labour is seen automatically to breed underdevelopment, the logical antidote to capitalist underdevelopment is not socialism, but autarchy. So long as capitalism develops merely through squeezing dry the 'third world', the primary opponents must be core versus periphery, the cities versus the countryside - not the international proletariat, in alliance with the oppressed people of all countries, versus the bourgeoisie. In fact, the danger here is double-edged: on the one hand, a new opening to the 'national bourgeoisie'; on the other hand, a false strategy for anti-capitalist revolution. (Brenner 1977:91).

So if the African labour aristocracy thesis is so full of errors and dangers, why is it worth treating seriously at all? Firstly, because it is, in both its African and classical formulations, an attempt to come to theoretical and political terms with a fundamental problem. The problem is that of 'uneven proletarian consciousness and industrial sectionalism' (New Left Review 1973:38-9) - that proletarianisation is a matter of both unification and division of the wage employed, both gain in and loss of mass capacity for social control. The thesis therefore requires an empirical investigation of such phenomena - preferably carried out in more adequate terms and in a non-polemical spirit. Secondly, the African thesis addresses itself directly to the trade unions, and to the role within them of the differentially proletarianised. As Poulantzas has pointed out (1973:36), if we want to understand differential consciousness and behaviour amongst workers, then we will need to consider not only position within the division of labour but also 'positions within the division of labour that exists inside the working-class movement' itself. Thirdly, the thesis addresses itself not only to the industrial proletariat, but raises questions concerning the role of those non-industrial wage-earners who form the overwhelming majority of the working class in Africa. These issues have not so far been adequately dealt with in African labour studies. And criticism of the labour aristocracy thesis has tended to negate it, rather than to surpass it. Such a surpassing would seem to require 1) recognition of the problem that the thesis attempts to handle, 2) the development of a more adequate conceptualisation, 3) analysis of relevant evidence in the new terms, and 4) the indication, explicit or implicit, of alternative implications.

All this, moreover, would seem to be in a spirit suggested by Arrighi and Saul themselves. Thus, in their 1973 work, they stress that their essays are intended to provoke 'constructive criticism from concerned radicals' (8), and even in employing the concept of labour aristocracy, they say they would welcome another and recognise the necessity for a 'clearer conceptualisation of the African class structure' (98, f.n.69). In his 1975 re-consideration, Saul not only recognises the shortcomings of the concept of labour aristocracy, but urges the necessity for 'concepts which illuminate processes without denaturing them' (308). Agreeing that the role of the working class is far from frozen by history or determined by any internal logic of the current African socio-economic structure, he calls for concrete analysis of the economic, political, organisational and ideological conditions for the development of radicalism in the proletariat, and its alliance with other progressive elements. Finally, he suggests the necessity for a 'downward identification' of the securely employed and unionised workers 'not only with peasants, but with other, less stabilised, members of the urban work force' (310, f.n.13) - and the necessity to develop a conceptualisation adequate for the analysis of class solidarity or its absence. It is to such a purpose and in such a spirit that this work is undertaken.

## 3. The case considered

The present study attempts, thus, to come to more adequate terms with the very real problem underlying the labour aristocracy myth. The case considered is that of the Lagos cargo-handling industry in the 1970s. Here one could find, side by side, both the 'labour aristocrats' regularly employed by the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA), and the 'semi-proletarianised peasants' employed casually by the local dock labour contractors. The NPA (or port) workers were for the most part at least primary-educated, trained, permanently-employed, urbanised, unionised, and carrying out the clerical, administrative and technical tasks required to provide the industrial infrastructure, maintenance and accounting. The contract (or dock) workers were for a large part uneducated or illiterate, untrained, casually-employed, semi-urbanised, barely-unionised, and carrying out the unskilled manual labour of loading and unloading from ships, lighters, stacks, sheds, trucks and railway wagons. Not only were the two categories represented within the one industry and on the one site, but their behaviour appeared to confirm the 'labour aristocracy' thesis. The NPA workers had been increasingly organised in unions espousing liberal industrial relations ideology, affiliated to the right-wing national union centre, and through this to reformist Western unions, the International Labour

Organisation (ILO) and the multinationals.[10] The contract labourers had increasingly come to be led by radical activists of the left-wing union centre, itself affiliated to the international communist movement. The study will attempt to go beneath such first appearances, and also to consider the other significant divisions amongst the workers.

It should be made clear what the study does and does not cover. It is concentrated on worker organisation and collective protest action. It will be seen that this provides more than enough material for reflection on the division/unity dialectic. It is also limited to an eight to ten year period, mostly in the 1970s. An earlier publication covers the period from the 1940s to the late-1960s (Waterman 1982). This means that the present work falls entirely within the period of military rule in Nigeria and of increasing state intervention in labour relations and trade union affairs. This situation, however, brought out features of worker and union behaviour that had been concealed during the previous liberal period. The concentration on worker organisation and action implies that little attention can be given to the precise manner in which the Nigerian state and local capitalists attempted to organise, divide and control labour in the Lagos Port (this is dealt with in detail in Waterman 1979h: Chs. 1-3). However, this essential background is presented in summary in Part I of this work.

Although primarily concerned with a general theoretical problem for marxist theory and a general strategy problem for the socialist and labour movement, this study is also meant to make a contribution to Nigerian labour studies in particular. It is thus necessary to place it in relation to such studies.

## 4. Nigerian labour studies

Most writing on labour in Nigeria has been liberal in ideology, positivist in methodology and managerial in purpose or effect. Most of it focuses on industrial relations, collective bargaining, labour law and personnel management, rather than on workers, unions or strikes. The classical industrial relations study is that of Yesufu (1962), bearing all the predictable marks of a British colonial training. It is based on the assumption that British industrial relations are mature or developed, and that Nigeria is adopting or should adopt that model. There is an inevitable concentration on the formal framework of bargaining at the expense of the patterns of ownership, the nature of wage labour, the character of the workers. It is, nonetheless, an original piece of scholarship. Its neo-colonial descendants are frequently written without concrete Nigerian data (apart from the legal) and where

they do have this it is commonly dependent on other writers (Ubeku 1975, Offiong 1973, Damachi 1973, Udofia 1976, Fashoyin 1977a). This suggests the underdevelopment of academic studies on labour and labour relations in Nigeria. Such original writing as there is is usually based on large modern foreign or public enterprise, and is by non-academics - or non-Nigerians. The only Nigerian book to concentrate on labour relations in local capitalist enterprise is written by a Nigerian capitalist (Onyemelukwe 1973). The only one to deal with these within multinationals (banking) is by an officer of an employers' federation (Etukudo 1971). The single most important liberal study on labour relations in Nigeria since Yesufu is by an American scholar (Kilby 1969) and is but one chapter in a general study of industrialisation. Whilst this criticised the optimistic illusions of its predecessor, it was united with it in its search for a means to control labour - for a proper role for workers and unions within the existing system. Another item on labour in local captialist industry is again by an American and is just a part chapter in a work the intention of which is to help 'develop indigenous entrepreneurship in Nigeria' (Nafziger 1977:251). There is but one recent glimmer of light from liberal scholars of Nigerian labour relations: the textbook of Tayo Fashoyin (1980). Dependent for much of its historical material and its norms on the traditional sources, this is a competently-written synopsis, which additionally provides useful charts and diagrams, and which makes use of newspaper and magazine coverage of strikes and other developments in the mid- and late-1970s. There can be little doubt that the underdeveloped condition of Nigerian labour relations studies reflects on the level of Nigerian labour protest. So far it has been possible for capital and state to control labour through ideological persuasion, labour legislation, collective bargaining institutions and the techniques of personnel management. Even basic information on working-class conditions, attitudes and behaviour has not been needed.

The major original works on trade unions are those of Ananaba (1969), Cohen (1974), Smock (1969), Melson (1967), and Smyke and Storer (1974). It is remarkable that so few books should have appeared on what must be the largest permanent working class in tropical Africa. The explanation above holds here also. As to the orientation of these works, those of Ananaba, Smock and Melson, and Smyke and Storer, are marked by the liberal-positivist syndrome. The works of Smock and Melson are traditional US theses, in which the labour movement is simply used as case study material to make some point or test some hypothesis about 'conflict and control' (Smock) or 'ideology' (Melson). Both are limited theoretically by their acceptance of an existing system as their point of reference. Yet both carry

out original empirical research, either amongst mine-workers (Smock) or national labour leaders (Melson), and thus yield reinterpretable data.

The books of Smyke and Storer and Ananaba are trade union histories written by union officials. The first falls into the category of 'official history', being an account of the Nigerian Union of Teachers inspired by no critical vision whatsoever and evidently motivated by American trade union paternalism. Although also written by an international union officer, the second is informed by the author's experience as a Nigerian union leader. Whilst he accepts uncritically all the norms and values of liberal industrial relations theory, Ananaba retains some sense of labour not simply as a 'factor of production' or an 'interest', but as a movement.

The work of Cohen provides us with the only book that distances itself from traditional industrial relations analysis, from identification with the existing system in Nigeria, from identification of that system as simply 'developing' or 'underdeveloped'. He specifically rejects the 'crude notion of the state as neutral referee and arbiter' (Cohen 1974:263), and places labour within a political-economic totality defined as 'neo-colonial' or 'dependent capitalist' (41, 46). Cohen's generally socialist position, his sympathy for the workers and antipathy for successive ruling elites, did not (at this time) lead him to break sharply with liberal theory, nor to attempt a systematically marxist approach. Placing itself between conventional liberal approaches and a marxist one, Cohen's work was one of the contributions to a distinctive 'radical' or 'socialist' school of labour studies on the peripheral capitalist societies (PCSs) that is still flourishing today.[11]

Only a small number of writers on labour and capital in Nigeria have attempted to employ more systematically the concepts of 'social relations of production', 'social formation', 'class', 'exploitation', 'oppression', and others familiar from the vocabulary of even popularised marxism. The best is the now classical booklet of Eskor Toyo (1967). A bitter and accurate political critique of the competing union leaderships, inspired by a familiarity with marxist writing, Toyo's work nonetheless fails to consider the socio-economic limitations on the capacity of the working class to

> destroy the Balewa regime or anything like it and erect on its ruins a government favourable to the people, a government on which the people have real control (112).

The first attempt at a Nigerian marxist book on the

economy (Oni and Onimode 1975) is also limited by its primarily polemical-programmatic character, its assumption that a 'socialist alternative' is feasible in contemporary Nigeria, and its concentration on producing an economic programme for a 'socialist' government. It contains little analysis of the structure and dynamic of capitalist development in Nigeria, of capitalisation and proletarianisation in industry, of peasantisation and de-peasantisation in agriculture, of urban petty-capitalism. Seeing the fundamental contradiction as lying between the Nigerian nation and imperial core, concentrating on a moralistic critique of local capitalism, offering a programmatic alternative to neo-colonialism, the work remains ideologically radical-nationalist (despite its marxist terminology), and likely to serve better for a state-capitalist alternative than a socialist one. Regrettably, we thus still lack even an introductory study of the modes of production, distribution and exchange in Nigeria. Nonetheless, a start has been made (again by non-Nigerians) to sketching out the class structure and political relationships of Nigeria as a social formation. But in the absence of the necessary analysis of economic relationships such an exercise is bound to be more suggestive than definitive (see Williams 1976; Williams and Turner 1978; Williams 1980; Beckman 1981a,b).

As for studies of workers themselves, the only Nigerian to have contributed more than an occasional paper is Olatunde Oloko (1971, 1972, 1973). But in his case the role of social researcher as a servant of national or international management is made quite explicit:

> In 1973, the present writer at the request of a major manufacturing concern in the Western State, carried out an extensive socio-psychological survey of the factors which affect the extent to which its employees discharge their role obligations in ways that would enhance the effectiveness of the company. (Oloko 1977:61)

There exist, however, a number of case studies (once more by non-Nigerians) of workers and industrial protest, using marxist concepts or within a marxist 'universe of discourse'. These are the studies by Adrian Peace (1974, 1975, 1979) of industrial workers in the large foreign factories on the Ikeja estate, Lagos, by Dorothy Remy Weeks (Weeks 1975; Remy 1975, 1976) of workers in a large foreign-owned factory in the northern city of Zaria and the wives of these workers, by Paul Lubeck (1975a,b, 1979, 1981) on workers in the locally-owned and labour-intensive factories in the old Northern trading city of Kano. All are concerned with the relationships between the waged and low-skilled

factory workers on the one hand and the other classes or strata with which they are in daily intercourse. We thus obtain study of the following crucial relationships: 1) worker to peasant (Lubeck, Remy), 2) worker to urban petty-bourgeois (all three), 3) male worker to female (Remy), 4) low-skilled worker to higher-skilled (all three), 5) worker to supervisor/manager/employer (all three), 6) worker to paid or unpaid union officer (all three). Whilst the last two relationships have been the customary stuff of labour studies in Nigeria, attention to the first three has implied a radical breakthrough. The studies will be described at greater length in Chapter 1 of this work. Here I would like to deal critically with their findings, theoretical approaches and ideological-political implications. First a note on the significant findings. We see the workers as emerging from a non-class-conscious peasantry (except in the Kano case, in which rural class stratification and consciousness does exist). We see that even in the Ikeja case, working-class consciousness and action is limited by the literally petty-bourgeois aspirations of the workers. We see a male-female split in which the customary capitalist family split between waged and unwaged labour is reinforced by the split into worker and petty-bourgeois employment. We see a split between the low-skilled and higher-skilled worker. We see multiple splits between workers/unpaid leaders/paid leaders.

What are the shortcomings of these studies? Firstly, they are limited by the very fact that they are on factory workers! The seedbed of the Nigerian working class has been less the factory than the railways, ports, public works yards, shops and offices (Peace 1979:86,111,172). These studies therefore leave out at least one half of the Nigerian working class, that half being also the most experienced part with the longest-lived and best-structured national trade unions.

A second shortcoming follows from this: that the relationship between workers in different sectors of wage employment is missing. Without this element, any generalisations that might have been attempted about class formation or class consciousness amongst Nigerian workers must inevitably be limited or misleading.

A third shortcoming of these studies is that whilst we see the emergence of a specifically worker consciousness and action despite all the divisions, we are also shown the labour movement (at either enterprise, locality or national level) as incorporated into the exploiting and oppressing order in Nigeria.[12] Only Lubeck seems to have a positive orientation toward professional trade unionists. The negative assessment of the labour movement can be partly explained as due to the short timespan and limited locale of these

studies. The role of a national trade union movement in laying a basis for the existence of local unions, in preparing the ground for wage demands, and in ensuring continued worker organisation after strike waves, all this is inevitably excluded. It can also be partly explained as due to the failure to fully settle accounts with the 'labour aristocracy' thesis. It seems to me to be one of the characteristics of a consistent marxist approach to the working class that it should - implicitly or explicitly - equip it to release the possibilities that analysis has uncovered. Evidently, even this most radical group of studies still had some distance to travel in this respect.

Back to my own work, a work stimulated by that of the trio, and intended to go further along the path that they have opened. Evidently it is meant to complement the work of the three insofar as it adds analysis of a virtually unstudied sector of the working class - that within state enterprises. It also adds analysis of workers within solely local capitalist employ (the Kano enterprises were of mixed ownership). Further, the study of the relationship between workers in different ownership sectors should be suggestive in understanding the process of working-class formation in Nigeria. Finally, there is the attempt to trace out the mutually-determining relations between workers and leaders.

## 5. Analytical categories and fundamental approach

It will by now be evident that this work not only places itself within the framework of a socialist debate but also within a more specifically marxist universe of discourse. It does so at the level of analysis rather than of general theory. Whilst some of the concepts used may be my own, the work makes no claim to theoretical originality. I have attempted, rather, to draw selectively and critically from the writings of such contemporary marxists (and other radical scholars) as have themselves tried to come to terms with divisions within classes, divisions within the labour movement, and the specificities of peripheral capitalist formations. Beginning with an assumption that 'European' marxism would be irrelevant or inadequate, I repeatedly found theory and analysis of European - and American - phenomena enlightening for analysis of the Nigerian. Beginning, again, with an assumption that I could draw my approach and categories from the structuralist marxists (such as Poulantzas and his followers), I increasingly felt that this obscured the ambiguity, double-faced - dialectical - nature of phenomena that I wanted to stress. I have added to the Euro/American-based theories and concepts. I have retained certain structuralist formulations. Such theory will be introduced in the introductory chapters

to Parts II, III and IV as it becomes relevant. Since drawing from diverse sources implies a danger of eclecticism, I would like to set out here the initial assumptions underlying this work.

Capitalism is a social system based on the private ownership of the means of production. The capitalist class exploits a class of workers who - deprived of other means of production - are forced to sell their labour power. This is the source of profit, the stimulus to and purpose of capitalist production. Capitalism implies the increasing organisation and division of labour, nationally and internationally. The archetypal capitalist productive unit is the factory. The archetypal capitalist labourer is the factory proletarian. The proletarian-capitalist conflict is the archetypal form of class struggle under capitalism. With the development from individual capitalist to social capital, the concept of capitalism must shift from production (the factory) to reproduction (the total society). We need to recognise that education, the family, culture and science are internal to capital accumulation, and that struggles within and around them are also anti-capitalist struggles. Recognising the increasing incorporation of peasant and urban petty-production within capitalist accumulation internationally, means recognising struggles against this as anti-capitalist also.

The state must be understood historically as both outcome and source of socio-economic differentiation and hierarchy, providing both the coordination and coercion necessary for the general reproduction of class-divided societies. The specificity of the state in capitalist society is its formal separation from the economy. Separation is an ideological requirement, presenting an appearance of neutrality and common interest within a competitive and class-divided society. It is, however, a political requirement of capitalist development that the state intervene into ever more spheres of social life. This is to ensure the coordination, hierarchy and subordination that the market itself cannot. Thus we get state intervention not only in education, the family, etc., but also in production and in worker-capitalist relations themselves. Increasing sections of labouring people find themselves confronted in increasing areas of everyday life by the state, either as direct guarantor of capitalist reproduction or (as in communist states) a guarantor of coercion, inequality and hierarchy - which also mediates between them and international capitalism.

Socialist struggle is struggle against both capital and state, both competition and hierarchy. The bearer of this struggle is the working class, the crucially exploited and oppressed class of capitalism.

The assumption that the working class is the fundamentally revolutionary one within capitalist society is not something that forecloses on research, but an assumption that makes research into the nature of capitalism and the working class possible.

It is within such a framework that I intend to carry out my specific, local-level, limited-time, study of workers. And since marxism asserts the inevitable inter-relatedness of theory and action (research and policy making), I also hope to contribute to the self-liberation of the working class (and allied categories of the labouring population) from capitalist exploitation and oppression.

If such a general statement of marxist assumptions seems distant from empirical social research on labour problems, consider how it is presented by Richard Hyman, who specialises on this area of social practice. Hyman (1972:72) argues for the necessity in labour studies of a dialectical sociology to capture the dynamic interaction between social structure and social consciousness that other contemporary sociologies (stressing one or the other) miss. Spelling out what a marxist perspective implies, he sums it up with four words: '<u>totality, change, contradiction and practice</u>' (Hyman 1975:4). <u>Totality</u> implies the necessity to relate any part system or process to the whole. This means that one cannot, for example, carve out 'industrial relations systems' without referring to the social whole within which they exist, or study the 'industrialisation process' as if undetermined by the growth and decline of capitalism. <u>Change</u> implies the necessity to see any totality historically. Thus, contemporary Nigeria has to be understood not as simply 'developing' or, 'underdeveloped' in the abstract, but in relation to the past development of the capitalist world system, and also by reference to a possible and necessary socialist alternative to it. <u>Contradiction</u> implies a predisposition to recognise that qualitative change in any 'thing' requires that certain of its components develop at the expense of others. Capital, for example, has as its significant class components, capitalists and workers in a contradictory relationship, with the capitalists superordinate within it. The contradiction develops with capitalism (over the whole world and through a whole historical epoch) and its resolution destroys capitalism as a social relationship (although capital may continue to exist in other forms or relationships). <u>Practice</u> means understanding human beings as makers of their own future out of the materials and circumstances provided by the past. It is this that requires Hyman (and us) to be aware of the policy relevance of research. In Hyman's case, the policy implications are neither precise nor detailed, nor meant to be of application outside the industrialised capitalist democracies he has concen-

trated on. Yet, they are not without relevance to this study. Beyond a stress on the crucial importance of 'economistic' union action, and of autonomous rank-and-file movements as a stimulus to advance beyond this, we can find such elements as a stress on the role of socialist minorities amongst the generally non-socialist workers (1975:176), of an organised marxist political force as providing ideological leadership to the trade union movement (1971:52), of the role of non-union protest movements (women, student, black, anti-imperialist) as undermining capitalist legitimacy and stimulating alternative social ideas (1978:177), of the consciousness-raising value of reforms presented as invasions of (rather than admissions to) capitalist territory (1971:51), and of socialism as a worker-controlled polity and economy (rather than as nationalisation and a one-party state) (1975:201, 203).

## 6. Research strategy and techniques

It is necessary to say a few words about the research strategy and techniques used in this study. Most social science research techniques have been developed by liberal social scientists who either do not recognise fundamental contradictions within capitalist society, or who are specifically concerned to 'solve social problems' or prevent social revolutions. Marxists therefore evidently need to be certain that both their general research strategy and the specific techniques they use are appropriate to their theoretical approach and to a 'subject matter' understood as makers of history. Such issues have been a matter of primary concern both for radical and libertarian anthropologists/sociologists and for socialist and marxist historians/sociologists working on - and frequently with - labouring people in peripheral capitalist societies.[13]

The first question which arose for me in carrying out my research in Nigeria was to surpass the obvious identification as a rich, white, foreign academic. I say surpass because there was no way these distinctions and oppositions from those I was studying could be denied. I was able to introduce myself as a European socialist and trade unionist and as someone opposed in his own country to capitalism, imperialism, racism - and ivory-tower academicism. I was also able to introduce myself as a former employee of the communist World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) who had left it because of its statism and its manipulative attitude to the African trade union movement. I stayed in a cheap hotel near the docks, where I could eat and drink with workers and unionists, rather than the elite hotels in the city centre (where, as a right-wing union leader pointed out, both European and African union officers customarily stayed). I made clear both publicly and

privately that I was an independent socialist and that the purpose of my study was not to support one tendency or organisation against another but to assist trade union unity. I also said that since government and employers could obtain all the advice they needed to use against the workers, they would get none from me. But since government and employers seemed impressed by precisely the identification I was concerned to overcome amongst the unionists I was quite prepared to take advantage of this to obtain information from them.

I promised the unionists that the results of their cooperation (for which I never had to ever offer more than fares, photocopying costs and hospitality) would be returned to them. This was not only a matter of the discussions on drafts mentioned below (and which were of as much benefit to me as to them). It was also a matter of newspaper and magazine articles accessible to them. And of the final products of the project. Apart from this work, the length and complexity of which make it practically inaccessible, I have therefore produced a comparatively cheap and not too complex history of the unions in the industry (Waterman 1982). And I have managed to complete a tape-and-slide show on the theme of this present work. Whilst the microfiche archives (Appendix 4:1-5) are unlikely to be perused even by Nigerian union research officers at present, I hope they will later be valued by the labour movement in Nigeria.

It has been asked whether we should not 'rather than studying our friends, study the enemies of our friends, who perhaps are also our own enemies' (Huizer 1979:31). Certainly we should, and I hope that I will be able to complete and publish later a study of labour-control strategies in Lagos Port. But one cannot stop producing analytical or theoretical studies such as the present one, even when one knows that it is going to be read first and used first by the 'enemies of our friends'. All one can do is to avoid producing work which is addressed only to one's peers, which can only be used by capital and state. I am confident that my friends in Lagos Port will struggle to conquer this work, and that the friends of my friends will help them to do so. Having done so, I expect them to be able to make more effective use of it than their oppressors and exploiters.

Let us move toward techniques. It is evident from the marxist distinction between appearance and essence that there can for us be no simple 'facts'. We are faced, as Post (1978:466-7) puts it, with either raw or semi-processed (i.e. ideologically, methodologically or theoretically organised) material, on which we have to work theoretically to produce our facts. Other socialist scholars concerned with studying worker behaviour, have stressed the necessity for a multi-methods

approach (Lubeck 1979, Kruijt and Vellinga 1979). Whilst Lubeck considers this strategy to be required by the nature of his subject (worker protest at the periphery of capitalism), Kruijt and Vellinga consider it to be required by the nature of marxism as a general social theory. What both propose is the combination of techniques customary to the anthropologist (observation, participation and informal, unobtrusive interviewing in a customary setting), those customary to the social surveyor (formalised interview or questionnaire techniques producing data subject to statistical analysis), and the kind of historical methods indicated by Post. The use of multiple methods permits the 'data collected by each method to correct and to influence the assumptions and questions posed by all the others' (Lubeck 1979). The purpose is to provide new evidence for, and a new specification of, the general marxist assumptions with which research must begin. The original problem is to be reconstituted in a richer and more precise manner.

The self-conscious and systematic manner in which these researchers have carried our their research on workers in peripheral capitalist societies does, I think, provide us with a model, but should not blind us to the value of studies based on poorer resources, more limited access, or a single technique.[14] The techniques of observation, participation and informal interview are those closest to the daily practice of working people. In oral history, furthermore,

> those interviewed enjoy a very real equality if not superiority vis-a-vis the interviewer in terms of being able to determine the length, scope and content of the conversation. (Jorgensen 1978:113).

I would add that, unlike survey methods, such techniques require little technical skill or equipment. They are immediately comprehensible to working people, who can also rapidly master them. They run far less danger than do others of intimidating those interviewed, of making them feel their knowledge is of an inferior quality to that of the social 'scientist'. Unlike statistical analysis, moreover, the raw data and final outcomes of such methods are accessible to ordinary people.

Marxist researchers, concerned with helping workers to make their own lives and history, evidently need to weigh the precision of statement available through statistical analysis against the inevitably alienating result. The danger is of taking away from working people their own lives and history so that these can only be made by professionals. Scholars concerned to bridge the gap between mental and manual labour need to recognise this problem and take deci-

sions about methodology based on the purpose or audience they have in mind.

For this work I used a combination of the techniques customary to the anthropologist, social surveyor and historian, if in a less rigorous manner than those I have cited. The short time I had for on-site investigation (a total of 11 weeks, divided over three visits in 1975, 1976 and 1977) made it impossible to develop the overview necessary for a rigorous social survey. Such structured interviewing and surveying as I was able to carry out nonetheless provided me with at least sketch maps through the sociological wilderness that Lagos Port would otherwise have been. The limited period on site was compensated for by exceptional access to library resources in the UK, to archives and documents in Nigeria. The Institute of Social Studies (which financed the whole project) provided generous funding to allow the transporting of documents from Nigeria (as well as the return of certain unique ones generously lent to me). The ISS funds also permitted me to have almost the whole Nigerian daily and periodical press scanned and clipped for port and general labour news for almost one year (Waterman 1980e). The long periods between visists enabled me to process the survey and interview data, to make maximum use of collected documents, to write up and circulate to specialists within and outside Nigeria my drafts for comments.

Within Lagos itself I was able to take advantage of a familiarity with Nigerian workers and unions going back to 1968, when I had run a course for the leftwing Nigerian Trade Union Congress (NTUC) on behalf of the WFTU. Whilst these contacts gave me easy access to the leftwing unions, contacts with the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) in London, Accra and in Lagos itself gave me good access to the rightwing ones. Before, during and after the on-site research, I benefitted greatly from the presence at the ISS of both national- and port-level union leaders from Nigeria.

In this manner it has, I hope, been possible to use the various methods employed not only as a reliability strategy but for the reasons, and in the spirit, of Kruijt and Vellinga:

> Classical Marxist theory offers a fruitful point of departure [for a multi-level analysis of working class formation], suggesting a research design which: a) emphasises the study of macro-structures and processes, b) combines more detailed analyses on the economic, social and political levels, c) prefers historical-interpretative analyses over more situational diagnoses.

There is one more possibility of worker studies that should be mentioned. Given the customary capacities of worker leaders, and the ability of workers to understand the value of a book that identifies with their interests, there does arise the possibility for feedback from the subjects of the study during the fieldwork stage. For marxists this should not be simply another reliability strategy but a requirement flowing from recognition of the necessity to overcome such divisions of labour in society as have been mentioned above. The requirement is, then, not just to establish the kind of human sympathy that anthropologists always attempt with their subjects, but of demonstrating the role of the marxist intellectual toward (or inside) the working-class and labour movement. For myself in Lagos at this time it implied not only attempting to break down the traditional opposition of intellectual and worker but also exploiting the advantages which I had as someone specialised in research and free of the specific organisational loyalties required of the activists. The earlier-mentioned seminar not only provided me with feedback, but also taught me in practice what I had been intending in principle.[15]

## 7. Structure

The work is divided into four main parts. Part I provides the social setting, with chapters on the Nigerian working class and its environment, on the cargo-handling industry itself, and its labour force. It ends with a brief analytical chapter. Part II is concerned with the 'external relations' of the trade unions, with how they relate to capital and state. It has a theoretical introduction, which is followed by case material set out in a structured but - I hope - not tendentious manner. This form has been chosen in order to allow readers to see exactly what I am arguing with the concepts introduced, and to therefore allow them to make a different analysis of the same material. It also makes the material accessible to the general reader. Part III deals with the 'internal relations' of the trade unions, with how they relate to each other and to their own members. It follows the same pattern. So does Part IV, on collective protest action. The Conclusion considers the implications of the case studied. It also returns to this Introduction to consider the wider implications of the 'labour aristocracy' thesis, and to consider the adequacy of the alternative approach applied.

## NOTES

1. The argument here is adapted from Waterman (1975).

2. I have found Post's (1978:149-50) note on the

lumpenproletariat most useful, although my argument and purpose differ somewhat from his.

3. There is a basis in Lenin's work for such thinking. This lies not only in his opposition of the European labour aristocracy to the 'hundreds of millions of members of uncivilised nations'. It is also to be found in Lenin's shift in interest and hope from the West European working class to the Asian masses after the Russian Revolution. Lenin's whole argument for revolution in backward Russia was based on the assumption that it would trigger socialist revolution in Europe, which in its turn would provide a proletarian counterweight to Russia's peasant population. We can find this argument being used by him in 1903, 1905, and after the February and October Revolutions in 1917 (Lenin 1976:28, 110, 230, 240). When the European working class failed to play its predicted role, Lenin turned his eyes and hopes from the proletariat of the West to the labouring masses of Asia:

> In the last analysis, the outcome of the struggle will be determined by the fact that Russia, India, China, etc., account for the overwhelming majority of the population of the globe. And during the past few years it is this majority that has been drawn into the struggle for emancipation with extraordinary rapidity, so that in this respect there cannot be the slightest doubt what the final outcome of the world struggle will be. In this sense, the complete victory of socialism is fully and absolutely assured. (431).

4. My ambition here may be contrasted with that of Janice Perlman in her work on marginality in Latin America (Perlman 1976). Her purpose was to empirically refute and theoretically criticise the 'myth of marginality', but not to present an alternative approach, nor to analyse her own material within such a framework.

5. The source for this is primarily the collection edited by the pair (Arrighi and Saul 1973). This contains jointly- and individually-written items, but these are presented in the Introduction as contributions to collective reflection, and I have not felt it necessary to distinguish separate items or authors. Only Saul's (1975) reply to his critics is distinguished.

6. My understanding of 'conservatism' will be clarified below. For me it includes reformism and thus covers the behaviour imputed to the labour aristocracy by Arrighi and Saul. They seem here to be suggesting a certain ambiguity in the behaviour of this category - that it 'may not be' opposed to nationalisation but 'can be expected' to resist state reallocation of resources to other social groups. They might therefore characterise the labour aristocracy as self-interested rather than conservative. Be this as it may, they clearly see the proper proletariat as an obstacle to 'transformation in the total situation'.

7. A point well established by Brenner in an analogous case. Analysing the marxist dependency theorists, he says:

> It has been their intention to negate the optimistic model of economic advance...whereby the development of trade and the division of labour unfailingly bring about economic development. Because they have failed, however, to discard the underlying...presuppositions of this model, they have ended up by erecting an alternative theory of capitalist development which is, in its central aspects, the mirror image of the 'progressist' thesis they wish to surpass. (Brenner 1977:27).

8. I may have encouraged such a notion in earlier work on Nigeria, in which I suggested that a constraint on the radicalism and effectivity of the communist Nigerian Trade Union Congress was the absence of a 'revolutionary intelligentsia' capable of providing it with a 'scientific analysis' (Waterman 1973:307-8). John Saul (1975:307) seems to have understood this as supporting his position on the leading role of such intellectuals. This is a reasonable interpretation of my position at that time. I hope that the present work will reveal in both analysis and conclusions another orientation toward intellectual or political vanguards.

9. Jack Woddis, a prolific communist writer on Africa and the third world fits this category. In the absence of a revolutionary working class, he speaks of a 'principal revolutionary force which elaborates policy and provides the ideology and organisational experience and capacity' (Woddis 1972:174), i.e. an intellectual/organisational vanguard. He also believed that workers and

peasants should support regimes in which 'progressive groups of the petty-bourgeoisie have formed the independence government', in order to 'weaken the foreign monopolies and make possible the building of a balanced economy and the winning of economic independence' (147). Arrighi and Saul also shared with Woddis the notion that the radical petty-bourgeoisie was capable of fulfilling such a task.

10. The identity here suggested is precisely due to the role of the ILO as the international mediator of the labour/capital conflict. Significantly, it was created in the wake of the Russian Revolution and with the evident purpose of preventing further such ones. Its philosophy was one of a compromise between labour and capital under the benevolent eye of a 'neutral' state (tripartism). This is the 'ideology of the structure' (for which see Harrod 1977), since it is formally composed of groups of employers, unions and states. With the movement of the major locus of capitalist instability from Europe to the capitalist periphery after World War 2, the activity of the ILO has moved largely from the sphere of law and institutions to that of economic and social structures. The new philosophy is developmentalism (Harrod's 'ideology of the programmes'). Conflicts between workers and capitalists, or unions and national capital, are largely ironed-out or mystified by the ILO, which acts as a transnational network of association and ideology, dispensing patronage and training labour department officers, academics and union leaders in the ideologies of liberalism and developmentalism. See further on this issue Waterman (1979j:Part 4). To see how in 1957 a prominent portworker union leader was incorporated into the capital-state-union network at the ILO in Geneva, see Waterman (1982:116).

11. For an attempt to identify different radical approaches to the study of African labour history, see my review of a collection co-edited by Robin Cohen (Waterman 1980b).

12. Concerning officials and members, the Zaria study indicates a conflict between members and voluntary officials, the Kano study one between members and both workplace and paid local officials, the Lagos study one between members and local officials on the one hand and the national leadership on the other. All three show us the member-official relationship dialectically, enabling us to see how worker inexperience creates dependence on privileged and qualified strata which can easily be detached from their followers. The Lagos study also shows how a more experienced wage labour

force is able to exercise considerable control over local officials. But the national leaderships are presented in the Lagos study largely as exploiters unrelated to the workers. My past findings (Waterman 1976) suggest there was both criticism of and dependence on headquarters officials. And this in turn suggests that the member-official relationship at the higher level is analogous to that at the lower one. The universal dependence of the Lagos leaders (at least until recently) on external sources of finance, patronage and ideology does not imply that they have no roots in the class they rest on, nor that they provide no service for it. The problem is whether the service is relevant or not. What of their findings with respect to the different radical (Nigerian Trade Union Congress) and moderate (United Labour Congress) tendencies within the national trade union movement? Adrian Peace's work condemns both leaderships indiscriminately. Dorothy Remy does not comment on either, but we may note that the successive self-seeking leaders of the Zaria union were affiliated to the radical NTUC. Paul Lubeck's criticism is, in fact, based on three officials leading the Kano branch of the United Labour Congress, one being a public sector clerk and a wealthy trader, the other two waiting to receive advanced training at labour relations institutes in Israel, Western Europe or the US. Workers' attitudes towards these was a 'fee for service' one. My own past findings allow for the evidence revealed by the trio, but also distinguish between the ULC leadership, as 'active agents of conservatism amongst the workers', and that of the NTUC, possessed of at least a 'radical rhetoric and ideology' (Waterman 1976:183).

13. For the first case I have in mind the major collection on this issue by Huizer and Mannheim (1979), for the second case the various writers to be named. In the Introduction to his volume, Gerrit Huizer deals, amongst other matters, with the following issues: the self-identification of the researcher; whether one should be studying one's friends or one's enemies (the rich and powerful); with which techniques and to what specific end should the study be carried out (the problem of action research); the nature of the product and to whom it should be made available. It is noteworthy that it has been anthropologists who have paid the most attention to such problems. It is further noteworthy that this particular study has as subject matter primarily studies on rural people or on cultures, defines its targets as imperialism and patriarchalism, and has as its aim 'a view from below'. What worker studies (or the worker studies I will be referring to) would

seem to add here is the target of capital and state and the aim of socialism. I see the two perspectives as complementary but do not have space here to develop the point or investigate possible contradictions.

14. Studies by Krawchenko (1979) on worker protest in the Soviet Union and Moorsom (1979) on Namibia show what can be done with the most limited and partial primary or secondary printed sources and with no access to the site. The work of Shaheed (1977, 1979) shows that can be achieved basically with anthropological techniques. Whilst the methods of the first two were borne of necessity, there is an argument for the techniques used by the third.

15. One union leader refused to attend on the grounds that I had written damaging things about him and made these available to his international patrons. I persuaded him that the seminar was the place to put me publicly right on any possible falsehoods or misinterpretations, and he not only attended and contributed positively but continued to co-operate fully on later occasions. Another leader was informed by someone who had attended the seminar that I had slandered him as a tribalist. As a result, I was not only subjected to a public display of this leader's wrath but required (since I wanted to restore my previously good relations with him and his union) to stand in virtual silence whilst receiving several unionists' lectures on research ethics! On carefully re-examining my material I discovered (to my relief) that my statement was not legally actionable, but also that it could lend credence to the accusations of tribalism against this man and his union. I felt required to carry out further work on this issue and my findings and conclusions turned out to be far more complex. I would like to think that both the unionists and the research benefitted from these experiences. On the one hand I hope to have established with them the necessity for revealing evidence they would rather not have brought to light, and of making judgements inspired by the earlier mentioned motives. On the other hand I hope to have demonstrated that unionists can make their own history not only by submitting themselves passively to researchers, but by a dialogue in which they argue their own interpretations against those of the professional.

# PART I

## THE SETTING: 'GREATER GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT IN SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT'

Chapter 1: Industry, labour relations and workers in the 1970s

Chapter 2: The Lagos cargo-handling industry

Chapter 3: NPA and dock labour: a direct comparison

Chapter 4: Discussion: shaping, dividing and controlling

# Chapter 1
# INDUSTRY, LABOUR RELATIONS AND WORKERS IN THE 1970s[1]

We can distinguish three major periods in the development of Nigerian capitalism. The colonial period was one of primary agricultural and mineral production. Colonial capitalism stimulated local trading, peasant agriculture and the urban petty-commodity sector. It also required a comparatively large state sector charged with providing the necessary physical infrastructure, as well as the legal, administrative, municipal and repressive institutions. The Lagos cargo-handling industry dates from this period. The period of decolonisation (1950s to mid- or late-1960s) was one in which the main interest of an increasingly transnational monopoly capitalism was in import-substituting production of consumer, intermediate and producer goods. This further stimulated rural and urban petty-commodity production, and both permitted and required a considerable expansion of state employment. It was during this period that the number of dock labour contractors multiplied from one or two to a dozen or more, and that the Marine Department developed into the Nigerian Ports Authority.

The present period is that of a specific peripheral capitalist industrial development, and dates from the end of the Civil War (1967-70). It is closely connected with the oil boom that began at that time. The primary stimulus from international monopoly capitalism in this period was obviously the demand for oil. Characteristic of oil extraction is its minimal impact in terms of labour required, forward or backward linkages, and the massive revenue it provides to the host state (at least when the state personnel begins to play the market in a national capitalist spirit). These massive revenues stimulated an explosive growth in the importation of both consumer and producer goods from a capitalist world faced with a shrinking world market, as well as providing a basis for the development from a primarily commercial capitalism locally to an industrialising one. Thus, we see in Nigeria not only motor assembly but also the beginning of petro-chemicals and iron and steel production. The oil boom put tremendous stress on Lagos Port and led to a dramatic growth in its capacity, equipment and - eventually - throughput.

At the present period we can distinguish at least four wage-labour sectors 'occupying structurally different positions in the national political economy' (Remy 1975: 161). Firstly, there is the monopoly capitalist sector, consisting of the local subsidiaries of the transnational companies (TNCs), owned and controlled by the TNCs and top Nigerian manager/shareholders. We may include within this sector the increasing number of joint state-foreign enterprises since these are, effectively, state subsidised rather than state controlled. The capital-intensity and/or protection from foreign competition enjoyed by these firms has made them (until the late 1970s) prepared to pay high wages and favour Anglo-American personnel and labour relations policies in order to stabilise a small and comparatively well-educated labour force. This sector is, however, subject to market vagaries, implying rise and fall in labour demand. And it has been (possibly with a view to a future export role for Nigerian industry) decreasingly liberal toward its labour force.

Secondly, we have the state sector proper, consisting of the ministries, corporations, servies (teaching is still the largest single occupational category in Nigeria), at national or local level. Into this sector has been brought the complex British apparatus of public sector grading, training, promotion and negotiation. Workers are protected from most changes in market conditions and enjoy high job security. They have usually been the first to benefit from national wage awards. This is where we find the NPA.

Thirdly, the Nigerian capitalist sector, consisting largely of smaller-scale, simpler-technology, consumer goods industries (e.g. sweets, footwear, printing, baking, kitchenwear), small-scale processing (cement blocks, groundnut crushing, wood sawing), transportation (ships, buses, trucks, taxis), commerce and services, construction and labour-contracting (for construction, dock labour). The larger companies are often those taken over (formally) from the 'third world' (e.g. Indian, Hong Kong, Lebanese) capitalists under indigenisation. They are often partly owned or managed by such 'expatriates', or still largely owned by foreign capitalists or by the different Nigerian states. Smaller size and simpler technology implies a more competitive market situation. They tend to operate below government minimum pay and conditions, accepting a high turnover amongst a generally uneducated work force. They are hostile to unions, the management style being personalistic. Here we can find the Lagos cargo-handling contractors.

Lastly, there is the petty-entrepreneurial sector, in which the 'owner' may or may not employ his immedi-

ate family and one or more apprentices. One survey (Aluko et.al.1972) suggests an average of 1.5 employees per enterprise (excluding the owner). The most common trades were tailoring, carpentry, goldsmithing, car and cycle repairing, in that order. Evidently, such enterprises operate in a highly-competitive market, with tiny profit margins, requiring a working week 30 percent longer, at pay possibly 50 percent less, than the capitalist sector. Despite the modern nature of many of the activities, the labour relations are frequently of a pre-industrial type, with employees often having apprenticeship status, paying fees, receiving not a wage but the right to use equipment in their own time for their own clients.

Given the conventional conceptualisation and the dubious quality of Nigerian statistics, it is almost impossible to be sure of even orders of magnitude for the working class or its component parts. However, we will draw on what is available in order to make the above account a little less impressionistic. (FRN Plan 1975: Table 32.7).

With a total population estimated at some 70 million in 1975, Nigeria was reckoned to have a labour force of over 29 million. How does this break up? The figures below have been rounded and do not add exactly but they speak clearly enough for our purposes. Of the 29 million, some 17.8 million (61 percent) was in agricultural self-employment. Some 7.8 million (26.8 percent) was in non-agricultural self-employment as 'self-account, unpaid household workers and unpaid apprentices'. Whilst some of these might be in rural areas, most would have been in the cities. 1.3 million (4.4 percent) was listed as unemployed. Again these would have been primarily in the cities. Only some 2.2 million (7.5 percent) of the labour force was in wage labour - over 90 percent of these being in the cities. Within the wage-employment sector we can, unfortunately, only distinguish between those employed within establishments employing 10 or more (thus including Nigerian capitalists and petty-capitalists, as well as the Nigerian state and the TNCs) and those employed in establishments with less than 10 workers (thus including both petty-capitalists and petty-bourgeois employers). The 'medium and large' category employs some 1.5 million, the 'small' some 680,000. If only 1.5 million are in the 'medium to large' sector, than those in establishments employing over 100 are evidently much less. Amongst the 1.5 million, one million are in the public sector, some half million in the private. Thus, despite the growth of private capitalist employment, there are still twice as many in the private sector. We can conceive of Nigerian wage-earners as surrounded by an urban sea of petty-producers and unemployed, this being surrounded by a rural ocean of peasants.

There have been identified two periods within the history of industrial relations in Nigeria. The first is that of the 'Anglo-Saxon Model' identified by Peter Kilby (1969), although it should, perhaps, be more properly described as a Liberal-Paternalist Colonial model. The second period has been identified in the literature negatively, in terms of what has been 'eroded away as a result of increased government interference' (Fashoyin 1977a), rather than positively, in terms of some new model. But we can recognise it as a clear tendency toward the Corporatist model common to much of Latin America. Let us now examine and compare the two periods.

The first model, which was in operation from colonial days through till the middle of the Civil War in 1968, was appropriate for the period of commercial capitalism, during which there was little industrial working class, and the working class was virtually untouched by radical ideas or organisation. It could appear and continue under authoritarian colonial rule precisely because there lay behind it the iron fist of crude imperial military power. The second period began with the legislation during the Civil War and was still intensifying, although uncompleted, in 1977. It was inspired by the failures of the old model, and required by the ambition to make Nigeria into a capitalist productive power, capable of competing internationally. Such an ambition implied a control over wage costs not previously necessary. This new tendency was marked by the following features.

The old ideology changed only slowly. The first clear indication of change here was the declaration on labour policy made by the Commissioner of Labour just before the formation of the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) in 1975. This not only indicated a future orientation. It was also in many ways a comment on the changes in labour relations that had been taking place since 1968. The two key emphases were on 'the right to take the necessary measures to guarantee public order and national security' (Adefope, December 4, 1975), and on the active role of the Labour Department where there is a 'development-oriented administration and greater government involvement in social and economic development'. Commissioner Adefope declared the necessity for 'limited government intervention' in order to provide for the 'effective prevention and expeditious settlement of labour disputes'. He proposed positive action to restructure unions on industrial lines, introduction of compulsory check-off, the prescribing of all activities and influence of the international trade union organisations in Nigeria - the Organisation of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU) apart.

The legislation since 1968 has been of an increasingly directive and restrictive nature (Davison 1975).

The Trade Disputes (Emergency Provisions) Decree No. 21 of 1968 gave the Commissioner of Labour the right to intervene in any dispute, set out a clear procedure for their settlement, and made the reporting of disputes obligatory after a set period. Decree No. 53 of 1969 cleared up the ambiguity over whether there remained a right to strike. It became known as the 'strike ban' and, in addition to making strikes illegal, it also made it an offence to instigate tham, or to present them in the press in such a manner as to cause public alarm. Although introduced during the Civil War for a 12-month period, Decree 53 was repeatedly extended, marking a sharp break with the previous period and a turning away from the liberal model of the International Labour Organisation.

The wave of restrictive and directive legislation grew into a tidal wave in the period 1973-77. Decrees in 1973 and 1974 'rationalised' and consolidated old legislation but also implied greater legal controls on unions. They further raised the numbers required to create a union, prohibited security and other key state employees from joining unions, etc. In 1976 and 1977 there were issued two decrees which created complex hierarchies of bargaining institutions and procedures, and severely restricted both the right to strike and the freedom of worker leaders.

The significant development in the role of the police in industrial relations during this period has been underlined by Adeogun (1979). The pattern of arrests suggested a continuation of the traditional bias against the radicals and in favour of the moderates in the unions. This was confirmed by the continuation of the practice of the appointment to board posts and regional commissionerships of leading moderates.

The creation in December 1975 of the united Nigerian Labour Congress must be considered under the rubric of labour control institutions since it was in good part a product of government encouragement. A rationalisation of national union structures was a requirement for greater state control. When, however, the trade union leaders of all tendencies themselves proved capable of creating such an organisation, government reacted with considerable ambiguity. On the one hand the founding conference was honoured with the official greetings of the Commissioner of Labour, and on the other hand government issued in February 1976 an order for a 'Tribunal of Inquiry into the Activities of Trade Unions'. Foreshadowed in the Commissioner's statements in December, the tribunal was to inquire into the financing of the old trade union centres, the assets of officers, the activities of foreign union organisations, and compliance with the wartime emergency legislation banning strikes. Although the out-

come of the tribunal was by no means a foregone conclusion, the intention behind it must have been that of discrediting the leaders of the new Congress, or at least of publicly demonstrating that they were tarred with the same brush of mismanagement and financial duplicity as the senior service and former commissioners had recently been shown to be. This the tribunal certainly achieved. The leading officers were shown to have misappropiated or mishandled thousands of nairas of foreign money sent from New York, Prague, Brussels and elsewhere. The tribunal then recommended, and government accepted, that a dozen trade union leaders should be banned from office-holding in the movement - thus escalating further the assault on the tradition of trade union autonomy (Abebiyi Report 1977; FRN Views 1977).

Having first pushed the unions toward creating a new united central body, and then having discredited the traditional national union leaders of both tendencies, the way was now open for a new Trade Union Administrator to restructure the hundreds of unions left over from the liberal period into a handful of 'industrial' ones.

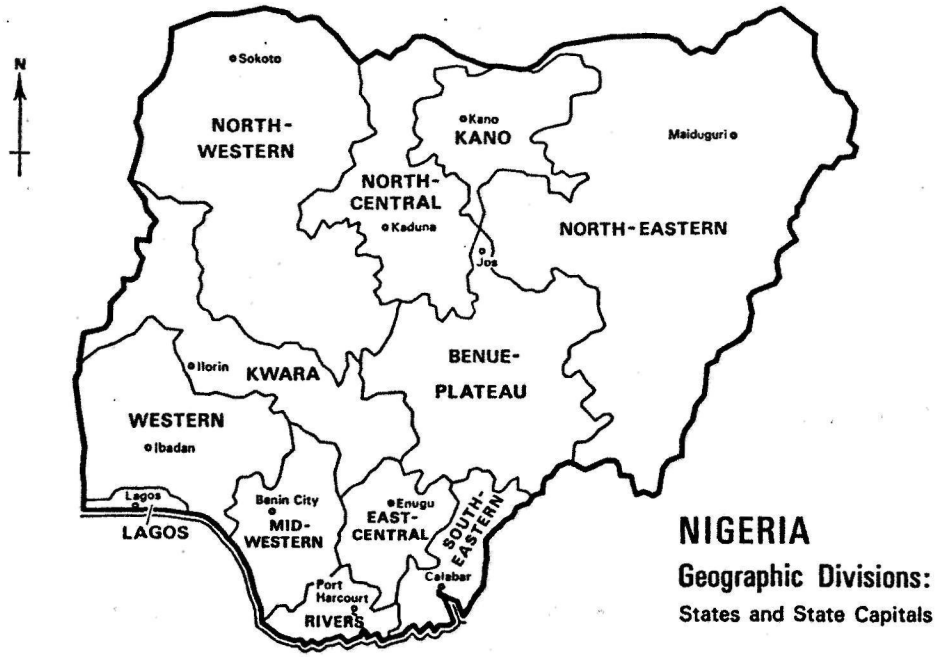
Despite the virtual transformation of the pattern of labour control, the Nigerian state had not by mid-1977 managed to establish adequate control over the Nigerian working class. Neither new legislation, nor wage 'concessions', neither the discrediting of the traditional union leadership, nor promises of 'assistance' in creating a new one, none of these had managed to curb the traditional autonomy of spirit and capacity for enterprise- or industry-level action. In order to understand the reasons for this - and its limitations - we need to consider both the nature of the trade union movement and of the working class itself. First the union movement.

During the current period of peripheral capitalist industrialisation (from 1970) one notices the increasing density of the factory working class, as well as its geographical spread to cities like Ibadan, Kano, Zaria (Figures 1.1 and 1.2). The growing strength of industrial trade unionism (inside and outside the public sector), plus the decreasing purchase of both social-democratic and communist ideology on an increasingly unfamiliar reality, led also to a decline in the importance of the dominant national centres. Experienced professional unionists with a career commitment and closer contact with workers began to dominate the movement. The growing importance of the factory working class was symbolised by its domination of the Adebo (1969-70) and Udoji (1975)[2] strike movements - movements largely carried out on local initiative and taking place forcefully in Kano as well as Lagos. Although there was no such clear political undertone

Figure 1.1 Nigeria: Ethnic groups and the pre-1967 regions


Source: Nigerian Politics: The People's View. London: Cassell, 1976. (Reproduced with permission).

Figure 1.2 Nigeria: The 12 state structure, 1967-75




Source: Nigerian Politics: The People's View. London: Cassell. 1976. (Reproduced with permission).

to these two movements as there were to those of 1945 and 1964, the strikes were aimed at foreign and local capitalists as well as at the state. The unevenness of organisational growth, and the rise and fall of overtly political protest, must sensitise us to the manner in which unionism unites workers according to the contours imposed on them by the capitalist system. The changing nature and ideologies of worker leaders likewise reflect the problem of the division of labour within the trade unions - with leaders defining strategies and organising or literally disorganising the movement largely on their own initiative.

Convincing evidence of this is provided by the struggle over the creation of a single, united national trade union organisation in the mid-1970s. The creation of the NLC was due in the first place (as we have seen) to an initiative of the state. Can we say that it was due for the other part to popular working-class pressure, that it was an attempt to transform the evident autonomy of spirit and capacity for enterprise- or industry-level struggle into a solid and responisve national-level organisation? There is no evidence for this, and ordinary trade union members have few, if any, means for exercising such influence.

The creation of the new state-approved industrial unions and the new state-approved NLC (February 1978) was, in fact, largely a matter of negotiations between the state on the one hand and the paid and unpaid union officers on the other. Within the new industrial trade unions, the struggle for leadership was often between the traditional left and right, or between radicals and moderates regardless of traditional affiliation. At the level of the NLC itself, the traditional left considered itself well-pleased with the number of positions it had won, putting this down to its militancy and cohesion in the face of the division and weakness of the traditional right. However, the actual distribution of top offices within the new NLC was a result of closed-door negotiations amongst leaders of the new industrial unions, with trade-offs between left and right, and with the knowledge that the state held a final power of again refusing recognition to the new NLC.

The continued shortcomings of the national union leadership in Nigeria should not be misinterpreted in terms of its 'petty-bourgeois' nature, 'bureaucracy', or 'reformism and opportunism'. It is also in large part expressive of the nature of the Nigerian working class. This is suggested by the three recent studies of Nigerian workers referred to earlier. Let us consider these in turn.

Dorothy Remy (1975:161) states a position common

to all three researchers when she argues that

> the behaviour of industrial workers is strongly influenced by the type of industry in which they are employed and by the nature of the wider urban environment in which they live.

In her case the factory (Nigerian Tobacco Company) is more capital intensive than most of the TNCs. The petty-entrepreneurial sector in Zaria is still dominated by local residents and oriented towards the agricultural sector. Unskilled migrants are unable to enter the petty-entrepreneurial sector and are attracted by high wages in the one major factory. Competition for scarce jobs implies the use of ethnic patronage networks to obtain them. The patrons tend to be the better-educated, better-qualified, English-speaking workers, the mechanics amongst whom also tend to become worker-spokesmen or union officials. But, in Zaria, these skilled men have opportunities for personal advancement both in large-scale enterprise and through petty-entrepreneurship. The protests of the unskilled and uneducated fail because their natural leaders are able to advance personally, inside or outside the factory, through education or through the ethnic networks. Remy concludes (176)

> As long as economic security remains bound to schooling and patronage in Zaria, working-class solidarity cannot develop. Industrial unions become then not an expression of a class interest, but rather another institution within which conflicting interests can be pursued.

The Kano bazaar economy is (as Lubeck 1973; 1975a, b; 1979 shows) of a similar type to that of Zaria, but on an infinitely larger scale. However, the factories differ, being Asian capitalist or locally owned, labour intensive, paying below the official government minimum, and accepting a high turnover amongst the illiterate peasant youths who work in them. In this situation formal and nationally-affiliated trade unions tend to be organised from above and outside by educated business-minded individuals who do not bother with the factories. Unions built from inside tend to be dominated by supervisors, who frequently have extracted kudin sarautu (office money customary amongst the Hausa) from workers in exchange for jobs, and who continue to extract payments in trade union forms. As a widely-spread pre-industrial ideology with an emphasis on rights and duties, Islam provides the illiterate Kano worker with 'the only known and accepted standard of legitimacy'. Deference is paid by the poor to the Islamic learned man, or mallam, as someone able to 'question the legitimacy of established authority...

and sanction movements designed to redress grievances'. In one case a dispute was caused by the disciplining of a worker caught praying without permission, in another a key role was given to and played by a conservative Imam (prayer leader). Despite the common scorn of workers for unions organised from outside, or by political parties, they managed in the situation of high expectations aroused by the Adebo award, to develop their own strike committees, led by headmen (lower-level supervisors engaged in the productive process). These turned protest from destructive into constructive and effective channels, and took forms that were open and democratic in nature. 'Promote or fire' policies of the employers prevented strike committees from developing into permanent organisations. Lubeck's conclusions (1973) point in two directions. On the one hand he agrees with Remy that

> As long as the mass of workers believe that mobility is possible either outside the firm in the commercial sector or within the factory organisation...it will be difficult to maintain class-based, rank and file workers' committees.

On the other hand he points to the possibility of a 'viable understanding' or 'at least a marriage of convenience' between the workers and the paid outside union officials. This could, he believes, be achieved if the officials addressed themselves to the overriding local problems: job security, benefits, etc.

Adrian Peace (1974, 1975, 1979) is concerned with workers in Nigeria's largest industrial estate, at Ikeja on the edge of Lagos. The TNCs that have their factories here practice Western-style industrial relations. The local bazaar economy is geared to the needs of the large numbers of factory workers. The findings of Peace are as follows. Firstly, the rural and urban poor (from whom the workers spring or amongst whom they live) are not themselves conscious of being exploited, but recognise the existence of exploitation in the factory sector. Secondly, the national trade union leaderships are ineffective (although their head offices are only five or ten miles away), exploitative, and are widely distrusted by the workers. As for the industrial workers themselves, they see no future within the 'closed system' represented by the industrial sector (higher positions depend on education, and access to this is closing in southern Nigeria), and they generally aspire to become small-scale entrepreneurs within the 'open system'. This, however, stimulates militancy for if they cannot save they cannot obtain the capital necessary for entry into trade. Because of this, and because they live at the hub of Nigerian political life, they are exceptionally politically conscious. They are capable of creating and

controlling their own local-level leadership, in which they have considerable confidence - and of taking powerful and sustained industrial action. The rest of the poor benefit from working-class action, sympathise with it and support it. Therefore:

> The Lagos proletariat is best viewed as the political elite of the urban masses, a reference group in political terms for other urban strata, who substantially rely on the prevailing wage structure for the satisfaction of their own interests in the urban area, and furthermore look to the wage-earning class for expressions of political protest against a highly inegalitarian society. (Peace 1975:289).

What becomes evident from all three studies is the importance of the residential milieu for an understanding of worker behaviour and consciousness. Given the virtual absence of direct information on this for our case, it is important to add what we know about Lagos worker residential patterns more generally.

From surveys (Peil 1973; Fapohunda et.al. 1978) it is possible to obtain the following picture. Lagos is a fast-growing African commercial, administrative and industrial metropolis. Its population has grown from around half a million in 1952-53, to around 1.5 million in 1963 and over 2.5 million in 1973. Lagos is ethnically heterogeneous, with native Lagosians representing only about one-quarter of the population. Whilst a further third may also be Yoruba speakers, yet another third are from other parts of Nigeria. The heterogeneity is due, of course, to massive immigration. Half the population has lived there less than 10 years, 12 percent for less than three. Within the poor residential areas, anything from 25 to 33 percent of the population will be in the petty-capitalist or petty-commodity sectors as traders or craftspeople. Up to 17 percent may be unemployed. Around one half will be in waged labour, manual or clerical. Over half will be sharing one room with two or more others.

The physical conditions in areas inhabited by many port and dock-workers are sketched in Fapohunda et.al. (1978:67-8): squalid housing without equipment or facilities; an absence of paved roads; footpaths that serve as drains; poor transportation and consequent traffic jams. One could add the alternation of floods and water shortages, the lack of garbage disposal, the repeated power cuts, and the universal open drains. For an image of social relations within a Lagos residential area we must go again to the work of Adrian Peace. Although Peace is writing about Agege, a Lagos suburb adjacent to an estate consisting largely of subsidiaries of multinationals (and one that is pre-

dominantly Yoruba in ethnic composition) what he says is suggestive of 'working-class' Lagos more generally:

> Agege...continues to grow today in laissez-faire fashion presenting an immediate appearance of chaos and confusion...[I]n and around the Market...are located hundreds of small shops, stores, canteens and bars...Foodstuffs, clothing, household equipment, liquid refreshment, as well as more costly consumer goods, can all be purchased within a few dozen yards of one another. So too can a variety of urban services...Entrepreneurial activity and residence frequently occur under the same roof. So one is never left in any doubt that the economic and social climate is set and dominated by the independently employed men and women engaged in a myriad ways, making a living. As a result the minority of wage-earners spend much of their time when not at work in the company of traders, blacksmiths, bar-owners, carpenters, seamstresses, electricians and others, as well as that of their fellow workers. (Peace 1979:8-9).

Peace reveals the ambiguities of working-class consciousness in such an environment. The exclusion from such areas of the factory managers is said to reinforce the common consciousness of the workers:

> the fact that all wage-earners, whether skilled, white collar or from the shopfloor, reside together in the Town is in certain respects a counter to the divisions of occupational rank as these find expression within the context of the Estate. (97).

Yet the multi-class nature of these areas encourages petty-bourgeois aspirations amongst the workers:

> Within any neighbourhood in the Town there also reside the owners of tenement buildings who, beside being urban landlords, are particularly successful transporters, storeowners, contractors and traders. These are invariably self-employed men and women...They are important points of reference to the factory workers. (9).

Before concluding this section, it may be worthwhile drawing from Peace another element on which we have little evidence from the port case - the 'class element of everyday life' (94-105). The 'unambiguous two class folk model' of both work and residence finds expression not only in the overt protest action of factory workers or in their union organisation but also in the follow-

ing everyday behaviour: 1) the use of class-war language when speaking of worker-management relations; 2) acts of insubordination and sabotage - or approval of these; 3) the proletarian norms of solidarity, unity, collective action; 4) a 'folk-lore' of opposition and resistance, drawing on the major strikes of the past.

Despite the stress of Peace (1979) on the specificity of worker consciousness and behaviour in Agege, he nonetheless permits us to recognise its ambiguities. Despite the revelation by all three authors of the capacity for effective local-level working-class protest, they nonetheless help us to understand why they have not yet been able to translate this into class-conscious and representative national leadership. And despite the limitation of the studies to factory workers at one particular point in time, they nonetheless sensitise us to the complex structure and process of working-class formation in Nigeria more generally.

NOTES

1. For more on this topic see Waterman (1979h). For the preceding period see also Waterman (1982: Ch.1). For analysis of general economic development during this period, see Williams (1976) and Lubeck (1977a). Bjorn Beckman's two papers (1981a, b) were received too late to be drawn on for this chapter. They should, however, be noted for the manner in which they surpass earlier marxist writings on the political economy of Nigeria. Their focus on the manner in which capital and state are actually developing in Nigeria (rather than whether these can develop, or are really capitalist) is, I think, consistent with my own orientation in this study.

2. The strike movements are named after the chairmen of the two commission reports which led to the strikes. See Adebo Report (1970) and Udoji Report (1974). For the Nigerian tradition of discontent-commissions-awards-strikes, see Cohen (1974:Ch.6 and 233-39). For more detailed accounts of the Adebo strikes at local level, see Peace (1979: 150-73) and Lubeck (1975).

# Chapter 2
# THE LAGOS CARGO-HANDLING INDUSTRY[1]

Before dealing with our two sectors it is necessary to note the others alongside which they exist. There are the shipping companies, owning or chartering the ships that berth at Lagos. Traditionally this was the preserve of the colonial or multinational companies. But alongside these (and usually in dependence on them) there developed in the 1970s a number of Nigerian capitalist shipping companies. There are also the shipping agencies that act as ship representatives in port, taking care of the labour connected with loading and unloading, usually subcontracting the manual labour to the stevedoring contractors. Originally in the hands of the old shipping concerns, these have also been increasingly Nigerianised. A third type is the clearing and forwarding company, clearing cargos through customs and the NPA. Alongside a number of recognised companies there mushroomed in the 1970s literally hundreds of petty agencies in the streets around the port. The last type is the Customs Service, the government department charged with collecting revenues and preventing smuggling. The simple task of transporting cargo through the port thus requires four different agencies in addition to the NPA and the dock labour contractors. Apart from the two state monopolies (NPA and Customs), These tasks are being carried out by anything from a dozen to over a hundred companies. The 'vertical' disaggregation is compounded by the 'horizontal' fracturing.

It is also necessary to remember that Lagos (see Figure 2.1) was a boom city in the 1970s. New motorways were built down to and around the port, these being immediately blocked with the thousands of cars and trucks being imported. The neighbouring industrial area of Apapa was described in 1971 as a 'Showpiece of Squalor' (Daily Times, April 24, 1971). An atmosphere of dog eat dog commercialism, of lawlessness and violence surrounded and penetrated the cargo-handling

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Figure 2.1. Lagos Harbour, 1975.

Source: Nigerian Mapping Co., Lagos. (Reproduced with permission)


Jarmakani Tra
(Shop Compou
tors International
Industrial Gas
Milk (Nig.)
West-Africa
Esso Oil
Rd
ood Supply
Storage Ltd
Co. (Nig.) Bitumen Plant
ainers of West Africa
) Ltd
ondon & Kano Trading Co. Ltd
ever Brothers
mo Soap Factory
A Dockyar
Glaxo & Alkenburys (Nig.)
Nigeria Steel Construction
Trebor
Metal B
TIN CAN ISLAND
Porto Novo


Mkt
Power Station
Carter Bridge
Eko Bridge
LAGOS
LAGOON
PLAYING GROUND
Transport Service
Custom Wharf
CEM.
Lagos-Apapa
Ferry Service
RACE COURSE
Site of celebration
OSHARBOUR
Wharf
Apapa Quays
Yacht Club
Creek
Badegri Creek
Lighthouse Creek
GOGORO
Federal Palace

industry. Widespread theft, smuggling and piracy were met by ineffective police action, or large-scale and bloody military operations. When dealing later with worker behaviour it will be necessary to keep in mind the fractured, competitive, lawless and violent social and industrial setting in which the workers found themselves thrust.

In the following, a sketch will be given of each of the two sectors of the industry with which we are concerned, the NPA and the dock labour contractors. In each case we will deal in turn with the industrial structure, the nature of the labour force and the pattern of labour control. We will see major differences between the two, differences which had a major impact on the nature of trade union development in each. Finally a more detailed and direct comparison of port and dock labour will be made.

## 2.1. The Nigerian Ports Authority.

The headquarters of the NPA are to be found in a multi-storey block on the waterside of Lagos Island, the political and commercial centre of the city, overlooking almost the whole Port of Lagos. The authority consists of a General Manager's Department (responsible for overall control, and containing departments covering security, fire service, industrial relations, training and the biggest computer in West Africa), an Administrative Department (management services and work study), a Personnel Department, a Development Department (statistics, planning, etc.), Operations Department (cargo-handling and facilities), Engineering (maintenance and new construction), Harbours (pilotage, towage, etc.), Dockyard (maintenance of boats, etc.), as well as a number of others.

Lagos Port itself is owned and controlled by the NPA. It is in fact the largest in West Africa. It consisted in the 1960s of the Apapa Quay, an 8,000-foot finger-shaped jetty capable of accommodating simultaneously 14 to 20 ships, (see Figure 2.2), the Customs Quay (1,500 feet), and a number of others the names of which speak for themselves Fishery Wharf, Petroleum Wharf, Ijora Coal Wharf, Bulk Vegetable Oil Wharf.

An extension was added to the back of the main Apapa Quay in the mid-1970s, and the oil boom required the addition of a ten-berth 'instant harbour' before the decade was out. None of these measures, however, was adequate for meeting the uncontrolled inflow of cement and other imports financed by the oil bonanza. The frequently displayed incompetence and wastefulness of the authorities during this period did not escape the attentions of the NPA workers.

Behind each of the berths of Apapa lies a transit shed for storage. One of them is used for both general export cargo and dry bulk cargo imports and exports from silos. This one has elevators and shiploaders connecting it with the silos of the Nigerian Flour Mills, which has its plant just beyond the port perimeter. Several warehouses are hired out to marketing boards and used for the handling of cocoa and groundnuts for export. Running through and round the Apapa Quay are the railway lines of the Port, equipped with shunting engines and wagons, and connecting with the marshalling yards and sidings of the Nigerian Railway Company outside.

In 1966, as one of the series of probes into Nigeria's much-criticised public corporations, the new military regime of General Gowon appointed Justice J.O. Beckley to head a tribunal of inquiry into the affairs of the NPA. This stated that

> the Nigerian Ports Authority has, by and large, at all relevant times performed its duties and functions in accordance with the enactment under which it was established and in the best interests of the State and, as it may be, the general public. (Beckley Report 1967:233)

This sanguine judgement is, however, not one apparently shared by the general (i.e. literate) public, or the state, nor is it borne out by the Beckley Report itself. The NPA has been under almost continuous criticism throughout its history. Beckley found the following shortcomings in NPA organisation: (1) Redundant services, where the authority was providing services irrelevant to its purpose or duplicating those provided at least as effectively or cheaply elsewhere; (2) Passenger carrying, where the wrong man (or manager? PW) was put in the wrong job, the job was then tailored to fit the inadequate man and additional individuals were assigned the rest of his work; (3) Inefficient methods, from faulty techniques and processes to outmoded or inadequate equipment.

The Beckley Report also uncovered a series of gross inefficiencies and malpractices, the one being difficult to distinguish from the other. Problem areas included the nature of the Board, the nature and behaviour of the General Manager and top management, the awarding of contracts, the organisation of dock labour, and financial and land policy. Corruption, tribalism and favouritism were evidently rife among the senior staff and directors of the corporation.

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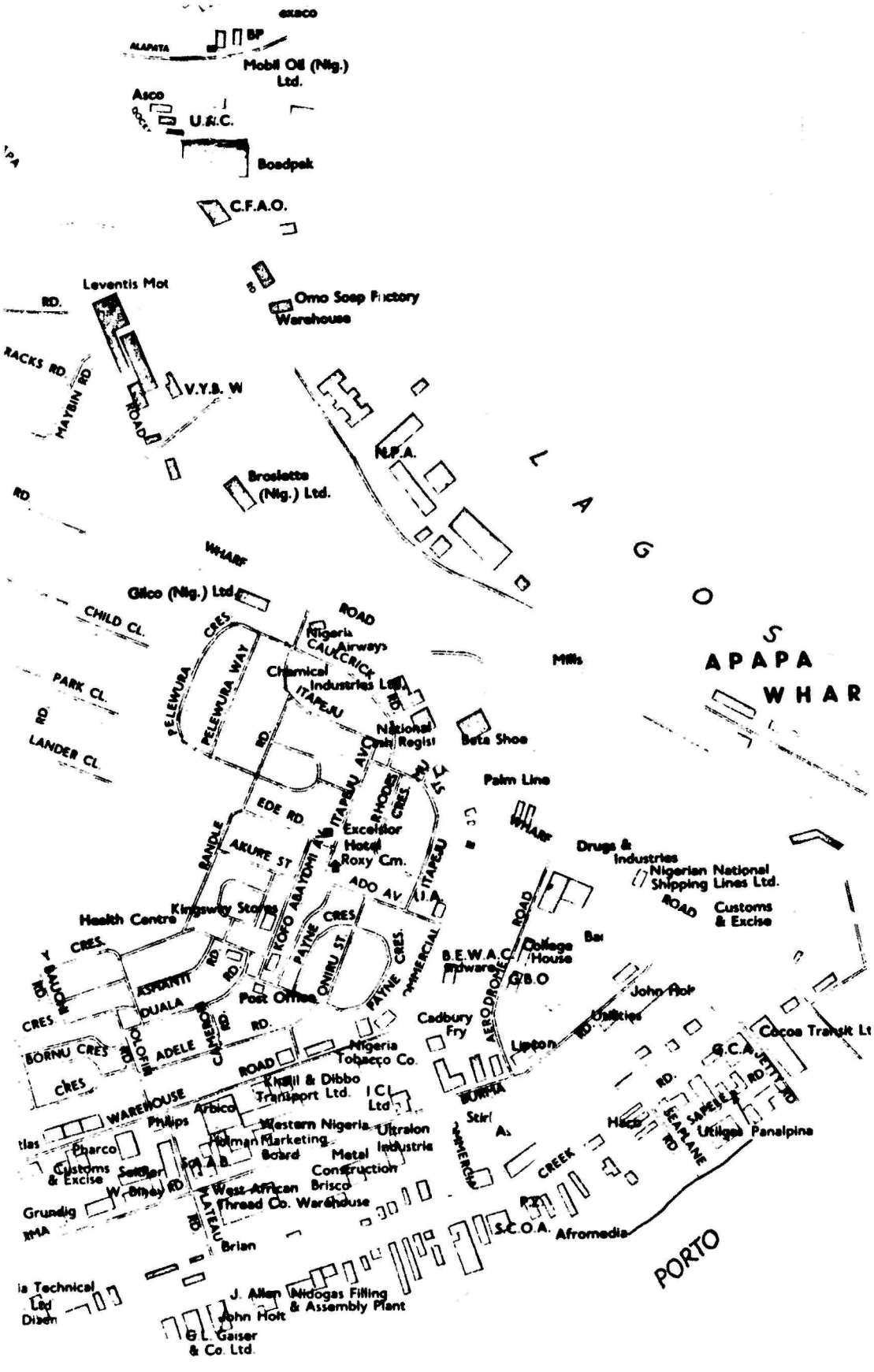
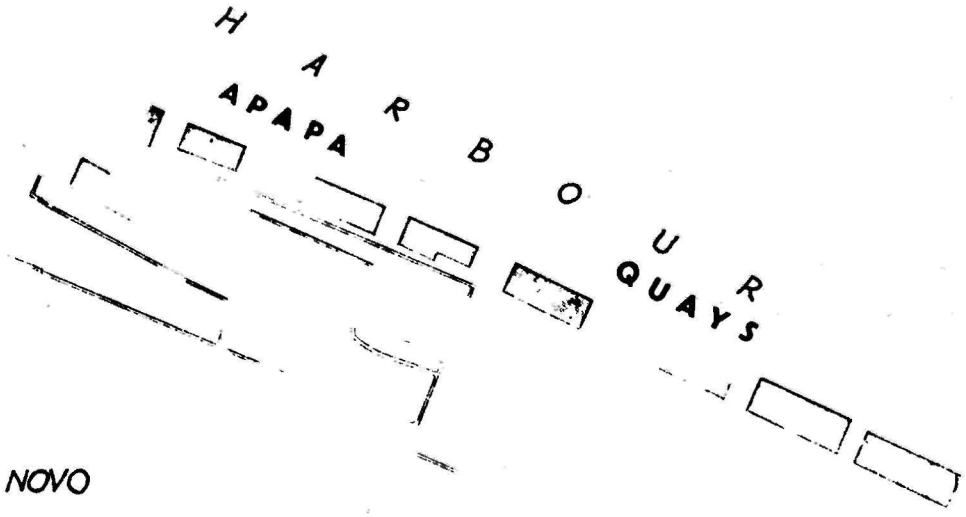
Figure 2.2 Apapa Wharf and Industrial Area, 1975.

Source: Based on maps drawn by Nigerian Federal Surveys, Lagos.


esso
BP
ALAPATA
Mobil Oil (Nig.) Ltd.
Asco
U.A.C.
Boadpak
C.F.A.O.
Leventis Mot
Omo Soap Factory Warehouse
RACKS RD.
MAYBIN RD.
V.Y.B. W
N.P.A.
LAGOS
Broselette (Nig.) Ltd.
WHARF
Glico (Nig.) Ltd
CHILD CL.
CRES
ROAD
Nigeria Airways
CAULCRICK
Chemical Industries Ltd.
PARK CL.
PELEWURA
PELEWURA WAY
ITAPEJU
RD.
National Cash Regist
Beta Shoe
LANDER CL.
Palm Line
EDE RD.
RHODES CRES
Excelsior Hotel
Roxy Cm.
RANDLE
AKURE ST
ITAPEJU AVO
ADO AV
I.A.
Health Centre
Kingsway Stores
TOFO ABAYOMI
PAYNE
ONIRU ST
Drugs & Industries
Nigerian National Shipping Lines Ltd.
Customs & Excise
B.E.W.A.C. Stores
College House
G.B.O
John Holt
Cadbury Fry
Lipton
Utilities
Cocoa Transit Lt
BAUCHI
ASHANTI
DUALA
BORNU CRES
OLOFIN
ADELE
CAMEROON
Post Office
Nigeria Tobacco Co.
Khalil & Dibbo Transport Ltd.
I.C.I. Ltd.
WAREHOUSE
Arbico
Philips
Western Nigeria Marketing Board
Ultralon Industries
Pharco
Holman
Metal Construction
Customs & Excise
Seltzer
W. Binay
West African Thread Co. Warehouse
Brisco
Grundig
Brian
J. Allen
Nidogas Filling & Assembly Plant
John Holt
G.L. Gaiser & Co. Ltd.
S.C.O.A.
Afromedia
PORTO
Hisco
G.C.A. JETTY
SEAPLANE
Utilgas
Panalpina
CREEK
Stirl A.
BURMA
AERODROME
Mills
APAPA WHAR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It is not clear to what extent the cautious recommendations of the Beckley Report were ever carried out. Many of those criticised were still there in the mid-1970s. After the fall of the Gowon regime in 1975 there was a purge of some 600 NPA employees throughout Nigeria. But the purge was carried out by a top management which was primarily responsible for the previous shortcomings of the organisation. Moreover, a review procedure shortly followed, reversing or reducing a number of the punishments. The public exposure of the dirty linen of the NPA nonetheless encouraged at least some union leaders in their criticism of the corporation.

The Nigerian Ports Authority employs in Lagos around 10,000 workers. The port is dominated by the Traffic Department, with some 40 percent of total staff, and the Engineering Department with another 25 percent. In terms of employment status we need to distinguish not simply between officers ('senior staff') and the ordinary workers ('junior staff'). This latter category is itself subdivided into the 'permanently employed', the 'daily-paid', and two categories of even lower status, the 'temporary' and the 'casuals'. 'Casual workers' are known colloquially as 'hire-and-fire'. Casual labour is supposed to be labour engaged on capital projects of limited duration. It is con-centrated in the Engineering Department because this is the one responsible for construction. 'Temporary workers' do not appear as a category on any other tables of NPA staff, nor is it possible to find any definition of their status in the voluminous reports or regulations of the NPA. The category seems to provide a formula for taking on staff on a casual basis for other than capital works. It has apparently been used for the employment of clerks on a trial basis, after which they are supposed to also be converted to permanent status. The 'daily-paid' category is a much more familiar one, having an important place in the history of wage labour in Nigeria. At the time of the Morgan Report (1964), there were in NPA daily-paid workers who had been in the category for 20-25 years. It was apparently agreed between management and the unions that all daily-paid, with the exception of unskilled labour, should be converted to permanent establishment within five years. Despite this apparent agreement little was done to convert them in the 1960s.

There exist hundreds of separate job designations for established junior staff within NPA and no breakdown of these in terms of numbers is available. It is clear, however, that the NPA is dominated by semi-skilled or skilled manual workers and by different types of clerks (see Tables 2.1 and 2.2).

The only departments with a significant proportion of unskilled labour are Engineering and Estates. The

Table 2.1 Permanently employed junior staff of Traffic Department, Lagos Port, by designation and salary grade, 1973

| GRADE | DESIGNATION | NUMBER | GRADE TOTAL | SALARY RANGE IN NAIRA P.A. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | Chief Clerk | 3 | 3 | 1636-2140 |
| B | Shed/Quay Supervisor | 111 | | 1260-1764 |
| | Yard Supervisor | 6 | | " |
| | Diesel Engine Supervisor | 1 | 118 | " |
| C | Quay Staff Grade I | 404 | | 960-1380 |
| | Asst. Yard Supervisor | 8 | | " |
| | Diesel Eng. Chargeman | 3 | | " |
| | Senior Clerk | 8 | 423 | " |
| D | Quay Staff Grade II | 2018 | | 536-1082 |
| | Diesel Engine Driver | 24 | | 698-1118 |
| | Senior Shunter | 24 | | 638-1082 |
| | Motor Driver | 80 | | 536-1082 |
| | Junior Clerk | 21 | 2167 | " |
| E | Shunter Grade I & II | 86 | | 548-740 & 364-596 |
| | Chief Porter | 4 | | 406-740 |
| | Senior Porter | 14 | | 364-596 |
| | Porter | 404 | | 364-548 |
| | Shedman | 61 | | " |
| | Messenger | 124 | | 364-596 |
| | Senior Security Staff | 8 | | 406-740 |
| | Security Staff | 80 | | 364-596 |
| | Terminal Attendant | 8 | 709 | 364-548 |
| | TOTAL | 3500 | | |

Sources: R&PT&CSU Conference Documents 1973; NPA Departmental Salary Structure: Staff: 1973

Table 2.2. Junior staff of Dockyard Division, Lagos Port, by designation and salary grade[a]

| GRADE | DESIGNATION | NUMBER (1975) | GRADE TOTAL | SALARY RANGE IN NAIRA P.A. (1973) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | Chief Clerk | 3 | | 1,636-2,140 |
| | Assistant Supervisor[b] | 16 | | " |
| | Marine Eng. Asst. I | 33 | | " |
| | Snr. Tech. Asst. | 2 | 54 | " |
| B | Asst. Chief Clerk | 2 | | 1,260-1,764 |
| | Marine Eng. Asst. II | 23 | | " |
| | Technical Assistant | 5 | 30 | " |
| C | Senior Clerk | 3 | 3 | 960-1,380 |
| D | Copy Typist | 6 | | 536-1,082 |
| | Junior Clerk | 17 | | " |
| | Ambulance Attendant | 2 | | " |
| | Overseer | 1 | | " |
| | Roneo Operator | 2 | | " |
| | Battery Charger | 1 | | " |
| | Greaser/Firemen | 96 | | " |
| | Asst. Overseer (Floating Dock) | 1 | | 638-1,082 |
| | Plant Operator II | 2 | | 536-1,082 |
| | Skilled Tradesman | 190 | | " |
| | Senior Leverman | 1 | | 698-1,082 |
| | Slipway Overseer | 1 | | 638-1,082 |
| | Saw Doctor | 2 | | 536-1,082 |
| | Donkeyman | 4 | | 830-1,118 |
| | Senior Overseer | 1 | | 698-1,118 |
| | Senior Foundry Furnaceman | 1 | | " |
| | Marine Eng. Assistant III | 39 | 367 | 698-1,380 |
| E | Messenger | 2 | | 364-596 |
| | Blacksmith/Striker | 11 | | 364-740 |
| | Capstanman | 1 | | " |
| | Foundry Furnaceman | 7 | | " |
| | Leverman | 1 | | 480-740 |
| | Polisher | 2 | | 364-596 |
| | Tool Issuer | 4 | | 406-740 |
| | Dockman | 19 | | 364-548 |
| | Semi-skilled Tradesman | 37 | 84 | |
| Daily-Paid[c] | Semi-skilled Tradesman | 4 | | 330-393 |
| | Clerk/Typist | 5 | | |
| | Unskilled | 86 | 95 | 312-346 |
| TOTAL | | 633 | | |

Notes: a) This table is based on incompatible and incomplete sources and must therefore be taken as only approximate. b) Assistant Supervisors may also be in Grades B and C. c) Daily rates have been multiplied by 26 x 12 to reach the annual sum here.

Sources: NPA Departmental Salary Structure: Staff 1973; Interview notes, August 1973. Dockyard Division Daily Strength Statement, August 1975.

Traffic Department is dominated by just one grade of clerk, Quay Staff II. The much smaller Dockyard is dominated by skilled and semi-skilled tradesmen, of whom around half are fully skilled. The Dockyard is, in fact even more heterogeneous than it here appears. The division contains shops for blacksmiths, boilermakers, coppersmiths, platers, shipwrights, patternmakers, foundrymen and several others. Engineering is, like the Dockyard, divided into separate workshops concerned with civil engineering, mechanical repairs, woodwork etc. It is also dominated by skilled and semi-skilled tradesmen. But alongside these there also work an almost equal number of unskilled labourers. With the exception of Harbours (mostly qualified ableseamen and semi-skilled labour), the other departments consist basically of clerks, typists and office machine operators.

Departments differ also in ethnic composition. This is, as one might expect, a highly sensitive issue within NPA and it is difficult to obtain accurate evidence on it. Explanation for a particular composition may lie in recruiting policy (past or present), in educational development, general migration trends or a number of other factors. The virtual absence of northerners is certainly due both to the low number of northern migrants in Lagos, and to the low level of both clerical and technical education in the north (educated northerners thus having little difficulty finding jobs locally).

NPA wage scales have always been extremely varied and complex, with each of the several main scales broken down into sub-scales, each of these having its own pattern of annual increases. Individual occupations often had their own starting and finishing points. And there could, in the 1970s, still be found wage rates marked 'personal to holder'!

The Udoji Commission of 1974 led to a certain 'rationalisation' of the wage structure within NPA. This enables us to identify a distinct top managerial stratum of not more than 34 officers within the NPA in Lagos. At the other end of the scale, it appears that over two-thirds of the NPA established staff fell within three of the lower scales. Whilst junior/senior differentials appear to have fallen since colonial times, the real wages of the unskilled port worker had risen only one percent from 1960 to 1975.

The conditions of service laid down by the NPA shortly after its creation in 1955 give some idea of the formal rights and privileges of its employees, as well as of differences between employees (see NPA Conditions of Service 1957). We may note as we look at a few of the different headings the distinctions made on grounds of employment status (established versus

unestablished staff), of position on the pay scale and, in one case, of skill.

Within NPA, as within the civil service and other corporations in Nigeria, salaries were reviewed annually and subject to increases on the recommendation of the departmental head. Medical and dental treatment was provided free to both established and unestablished staff. Leave and travel allowance could be granted at the Chairman's discretion for exams, sports, studies and trade union business. Five days per annum on full pay could also be granted for personal reasons. Skilled unestablished workers were permitted 15-30 days paid leave (depending on grade), whilst other unestablished staff could get seven days and - after three years - 14 days paid leave.

Chapters 12 and 13 of the conditions of service dealt with termination of employment and discipline. Notice was of one month for established staff, two weeks for monthly-paid unestablished, and one week for daily-paid. Punishments for misconduct began with the withholding of increments or other measures and went up to dismissal for behaviour 'prejudicial to the proper working of the Authority'. A procedure for appeal against such actions was allowed for. There was also provision for suspension in the case of an official against whom a serious or criminal charge had been laid.

In almost every one of these points there was a clear formal difference with the conditions laid down for senior staff. Informal rights varied even further. Yet the departmental, grade, occupational and employment-status differences amongst the ordinary workers often obscured the significance of the junior-senior differentials.

The official industrial relations ideology of the NPA management was in large part the liberal one of its counterparts in Great Britain and the United States, and as propagated by the state in Nigeria up to 1968. The intention of management was clearly to reproduce at NPA level the self-image of the state as a neutral broker between the interests of management and workers.

The industrial relations function and department only emerged gradually during the 1960s. In 1967 the NPA Chairman himself felt required to declare that

> A Labour or Industrial Relations machinery should be created possessing some scientific equipment and able to operate with rather more than hit and miss primitive techniques ...The directive force of this machinery should be pitched at [staffed by? PW] top management cadre ... (Beckley Report 1967: 160).

In the following 10 years there was little evidence, in either its staffing or institutions, that the NPA was really concerned to move from 'hit and miss' to 'science' in labour relations. Gradually a negotiation structure was built up within NPA, but the effective bargaining depended on regular or irregular meetings at the Marina headquarters of the corporation. The existence of this formal structure was possibly less important than the informal handling of minor disputes between union officers and ex-union industrial relations officers. But neither of these prevented the unions from transforming individual grievances into collective protest action. On the other hand, such occasional breakdowns did not seem to seriously bother the NPA, which regularly reported on the satisfactory state of industrial relations within the corporation.

The NPA had at its disposal, of course, a series of additional devices for containing collective protest action within tolerable limits. Although these were not part of the formal - or informally recognised - regulations, institutions or procedures, they were nonetheless a vital part of this machinery. These were the rewards and punishments handed out to individual workers, individual union leaders and whole unions for docile or hostile behaviour. The use of such devices suggests the reproduction within the NPA of the positive and negative stimuli for moderate or radical individuals and unions that existed on the national level. Within the NPA, however, it is to be noted that they were applied in a somewhat more subtle form.

## 2.2 The dock labour contractors

The Lagos dock labour contractors have traditionally carried out either one or both of two porterage tasks - stevedoring and lighterage (shipboard) or wharfage (shorehandling). These are services provided to two different principals - the shipping companies or agencies for stevedoring and lighterage, and the Nigerian Ports Authority for shorehandling. The three or four big and 20-30 smaller contractors fought each other openly and bitterly in the 1960s and 1970s, particularly for the major shorehandling contracts of the NPA (see Table 2.3). Regionalism, nepotism and corruption frequently determined the distribution of contracts. Most of the companies were owned and run by traders with an eye to quick gross profits. The damage and inefficiency were tolerated by the shipping companies since their contracts covered them against these. But the NPA was not so covered - or not so concerned to make its contractors meet their obligations. One reason for NPA liberality in this respect was revealed when the Beckley Report showed the corrupt relations between an NPA Board member and a particular contractor.

Table 2.3 NPA contract awards for 1963

| Firms | Directors | Region of origin | NPA Contract numbers & areas | NPA estimated value of contract (£N) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| West African Development and Stevedoring Co. | B.E. Njoku<br>J.E. Ofongbu<br>A. Nkwazema<br>B.O. Kadiri[d]<br>R.A. Gbajabiamala[e] | East<br>East<br>East<br>North<br>West | 1) Berth I & Transit Shed & Lighter Berth | 37,890 |
| Associated Stevedoring Services | Dr. J.A. Doherty[f]<br>Oladega Odutola | West | 2) Berths 2, 2a, 3 | 91,183 |
| W. Biney[c] | H.K. Biney<br>J.L. Smith<br>H.O. Davies | Ghana<br>Unknown<br>West | 3) Berths 4-6 & Transit Sheds | 107,537 |
| S.B. Bakare | S.B. Bakare | West | 4) Berths 7, 8, 9 & Transit Sheds | 83,792 |
| Bambadoo | Alhaji Bambadoo | North | 5) Warehouses A, B, C | 53,636 |
| United Stevedoring Co. | Alhaji Yahaya Madawaki<br>B.O. Kadiri<br>B.U. Etukudo[g]<br>Mallam A. Dikko | North<br>North<br>Mid-West<br>North | 6) Offloading & Warehouse D | 59,287 |
| S.D. Akere | S.D. Akere<br>M. Akere | West<br>West | 7) Customs Quay | 99,125 |
| TOTAL CONTRACT VALUE | | | | 532,450 |

Sources: Beckley Proceedings 1967:13:16; Beckley Report 1967:24:278-9. The first source contains numerous errors and omissions and has had to be corrected and extended by reference to the second.

The labour-contracting industry can be said to have been created by the foreign shipping companies and kept as such by the Nigerian state. When the NPA took over the quays on its creation in 1955, the labour suppliers were supposed to take on responsibility for the work organisation also. Despite 20 years of complaints about the quality of their work and the conditions of their labourers, the state authorities resisted the nationalisation or restructuring of the industry. The reason for this resistance is that top national political leaders and administrators also had personal interests in contracts (Beckley Report 1967). Whilst entrepreneurial self-interest argued for a continuation of the maximum amount of sub-contracting, longer-sighted bureaucrats argued for a re-structuring of the contract labour system. The argument was not only of technical efficiency but also of coming to terms with waves of forceful protest amongst the crudely exploited contract workers.

Although reorganisation only occurred at the end of the 1970s, its threat or promise has been a continual factor in union demands and actions. After 10 or 15 years of inquiries, reports, pledges and postponements, the new Integrated Cargo Handling Scheme (ICHS) was introduced in February 1977. The intention was to combine stevedoring and shorehandling in one operation, to reduce the number of thus integrated contractors to five, and to make one of these a 'model' employer (Patinson 1970). The model employer was to be the new state enterprise, the National Cargo Handling Company (NCHC).

Despite the great reduction in contractor numbers and the technical advantages of integration, the new scheme seemed to be suffering from both old and new problems. The major old one had to do with the nature of the successful contractors, since at least one appeared to be a traditional 'paper company', and only one of the four was considered by shipping agencies to be working successfully. The major new problem was the NCHC itself, a company begun from scratch and with a top management largely consisting of inexperienced government appointees. This had nonetheless been given the lion's share of the new contracts. By offering better pay and improved conditions it had managed to attract specialised staff from other contractors. Yet it was at first unable to carry our lighterage operations within its area. And on its first few paydays there were major disturbances due to the inability of the company to make out pay for its thousands of workers (Business Times, March 15, 1977). Finally, the old implicit collusion of the NPA with the contractors continued. The NPA was offering rates too low for contractors to operate efficiently and make an 'honest' profit, thus encouraging the contractors to illegitimately reduce costs on wage labour.

An indication of the labour intensity of the dock labour operation may be provided by the NPA rates for contractors. These assumed a 50 percent element for direct labour costs and another 50 for overheads (equipment and offices) and for profit. However, the labour contractors had very little equipment even in the 1970s. Most stevedoring equipment was provided by shipping agencies, which used this as the justification for the low share of their charges to shipping companies that they passed on to the stevedores. Since the contractors had virtually no equipment, the only way to increase their profits was to directly squeeze their labour force.

The dock labour force consisted of some 10,000 or more unskilled manual labourers (general labour, securitymen), semi-skilled winchmen and forklift drivers (mostly trained informally on the job), tally clerks (formally numerate and literate and also trained informally), and headmen (gang foremen, usually more-experienced labourers). In the absence of figures one is obliged to guess at proportions. Extrapolating from Biney's (the biggest and best-organised of the shore-handling-and-stevedoring contractors), one would guess that of the total dock labour force (i.e. including contractors' own staffs), general labour and securitymen account for not less than 70 percent, whilst headmen, winchmen and tally clerks account for not more than 15 percent (see Table 2.4). Separate from these, on the staffs of the contractors themselves, are the ancillary clerical, mechanical and junior supervisory personnel (perhaps 10 percent), and the senior supervisors, accountants, etc. (one or two percent) (see Table 2.5). Of the total labour force, 70 percent or more are clearly unskilled, perhaps 20 percent could be considered semi-skilled, five percent skilled and one or two percent high-level.

In terms of employment status amongst the ordinary dock labourers we need first to discuss the difference between 'preference' and 'non-preference' labour. The distinction is more theoretical than real. Although two-thirds of the workers registered against any contractor are supposed to have preference and be guaranteed 15 days work per month or cash equivalent, even the official figures of the Ministry reveal that the proportion has varied between 26 and 53 percent (Labour Reviews 1965, 1969, 1970). In 1973, the Personnel Manager of Biney's stated that the number of preference workers was 'around 10 percent'. In 1975, S.D. Akere described his workforce as divided into 15 gangs of preference, 10 of non-preference and 35 'casual' - a category with no legal existence!

The second distinction to be made is that between the ordinary labour directly employed by contractors and those in the 'pools' created under the Port Labour

Table 2.4 W.H. Biney's total dock labour force and the number employed on one day, late 1976

| Area and labour type | Labour employed 21.11.76 | | | Labour list, August - Sept. 1976 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | gang size | no. gangs | men (approx.) | gangs | men | recruits | absentees |
| Apapa total | | 210 | 2520 | 218 | 3725 | | |
| Shore (for NPA) | | | | | | | |
| Preference | 12 max | (29) | (348) | | | | |
| Non-Preference | 12 " | (14) | (168) | | | | |
| Casual | 12 " | (37) | (444) | | | | |
| On board (for shipping agents) | | | | | | | |
| Preference Winchmen | av. 12 | (5) | (60) | | | | |
| Non-Preference Winchmen | " 12 | (2) | (24) | | | | |
| Casual Winchmen | " 12 | (21) | (252) | | | | |
| Preference Labour | " 12 | (23) | (276) | | | | |
| Non-Preference Labour | " 12 | (12) | (144) | | | | |
| Casual Labour | " 12 | (67) | (804) | | | | |
| Sea School Jetty (for AIMS) total | | 109 | 1809 | 100 | 1635 | | |
| Casual Winchmen | av. 21 | (13) | (273) | | | | |
| Casual Labour | 16 | (96) | (1536) | | | | |
| GRAND TOTAL | | 319 | 4329 | 318 | 5361 | 232 | 189 |

Sources: Interviews with Biney's General Manager, and the Biney Labour List (1976).

Table 2.5 Junior staff of W.H. Biney & Co. Ltd., Lagos, November 1976

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Group 1: Manual and Mechanical** | | |
| Carpenters | | 10 |
| Gear Store | | 11 |
| Mechanics | | 21 |
| Drivers (lorry) | | 14 |
| Drivers (forklift) | | 22 |
| Canteen | | 16 |
| Wharf cleaners | | 3 |
| | Sub-total | 97 |
| **Group 2:** | | |
| Personnel office | | 4 |
| National Provident Fund office | | 3 |
| Allocation clerks | | 13 |
| Labour records clerks | | 4 |
| Labour checkers | | 5 |
| Record clerks | | 55 |
| Tally clerks | | 11 |
| Medical section | | 8 |
| Haulage section | | 31 |
| Time office clerks | | 21 |
| Revenue clerks | | 17 |
| Audit section | | 11 |
| Securitymen | | 15 |
| General Manager's office: stores and purchases | | 9 |
| | Sub-total | 207 |
| **Group 3: Operations** | | |
| Stevedores | | 12 |
| Foremen | | 9 |
| Supervisors | | 33 |
| Quay staff | | 26 |
| Work and Coordination staff | | 17 |
| | Sub-total | 97 |
| **Group 4: COWAC** | | |
| Drivers (forklift, tractor, crane) | | 57 |
| | Sub-total | 57 |
| GRAND TOTAL | | 458 |

Source: Information provided by company.

Office (PLO). Pools were created for tally clerks in 1964 and for securitymen in 1968. Demanded by these workers in order to strengthen their security and bargaining position vis-a-vis the contractors, pools were possibly granted to prevent contractors have complete control over workers responsible for checking and protecting cargos. The workers in the pools are employed and paid by the contractors, but for the purposes of discipline and dismissal they are under the PLO. In 1975 the tally clerks were themselves divided in status into the 'listed' and 'unlisted'. Amongst the listed were 221 'registered' and 67 'unregistered', the difference between them being one of implied preference for the first. The third group, the 'unlisted' or 'casual' tally clerks again seem to have no legal existence.

The 5-600 headmen are an important category since they are appointed to this position from amongst experienced labourers by contractors and are responsible for the gangs. In the past they were virtual sub-contractors to the contractors. Even in 1976, in the words of one operations manager, 'the headman is without exception the king' of the gang. He is also paid so little that 'he is obliged to take bribes' from the workers he employs. Although placed in a position of privilege and power over the ordinary worker, the headman is himself a casual labourer and is - with respect to the contractor's own staff - in much the same position as the ordinary labourer.

Official wage rates for general dock labour have been more or less linked to the official minimum for government-employed unskilled labour. Thus, at least the 26-53 percent of preference workers employed for over 14 days per month were said to be averaging above the government-employed minimum (Labour Reviews 1965, 1969, 1970). However, dockers have been deprived of what they are said to earn by 1) having to pay dash (a bribe) to obtain and keep work, 2) receipt of less than the published wage for overtime or standby (during enforced idleness). The differential between the rate of the general labourer and the headman is only some 10 percent, and the differential between the general labourer and the most highly-paid docker is only some 30.

If wage differentials did not significantly separate dockers, neither did working conditions. Considering the conditions that led up to the 1968 dockers' strike (Waterman 1982: Section 3.2.2), the Urhobo Report (1971:62-6) gave this detailed catalogue of common traditional troubles: (1) working hours exceeding those agreed with the union and contrary to the Factory Act and Labour Code; (2) employment of short-gangs of eight men instead of the required 16-20; (3) the lack of welfare facilities; (4) non-compliance by

some employers with the Workmen's Compensation Act, employers failing to compensate those injured; (5) non-compliance with the National Provident Fund (NPF) Act, the NPA admitting 'that even where there were violations of these provisions by an employer, no employer had been penalised for disregarding the provisions, even when the NPA recommended that such an action should be taken against such employer'; (6) violation of Dock Labour Regulations on safety, health and welfare, employers seizing job cards to make illegal entries on them, charging for free gate passes, depriving workers of wages due; (7) short payment by many contractors; (8) payment through headmen: despite the fact that the Port Labour Officer had warned contractors against a practice that permitted abuse, there was 'no guarantee that the practice has stopped since no effective authority to penalise defaulting employers has been established for this purpose'; (9) non-payment of wages to stand-by gangs despite the provision for this in the NPA contract; (10) unsatisfactory nature of the Dock Labour Registration Scheme: the dependence of registration on contractor recommendation encouraged bribery; and contrary to the purpose of the scheme, contractors were continuing to use unregistered workers with the consent of the PLO.

Common conditions and limited wage differentials, however, are no guarantee of a united labour force. Different places of origin, different periods of urbanisation and different languages keep workers apart. One-time or cyclical migrants have long been a major - even the major - element in the dock labour force. Recently they have been coming either from the Hausa north or from outside Nigeria altogether. At the other extreme of the dock-labour industry can be found the 'poolworkers', who are a significantly more urbanised group, including second-generation workers and native Lagosians, many with some schooling.

The multiplicity of companies, the difference between company and industry level, and the lack of bureaucratic, formal and legal relations within the sector, all make it difficult to generalise about industrial relations ideology and institutions within it.

In terms of ideology, however, it is possible to identify in the 1960s a clear difference between the contractor level and the industrial one. Hamilton Kweku Biney, son of the pioneer contractor, William H. Biney, inherited the philanthropic and patriarchal mantle of his father (Waterman 1982: Sections 1.3.2 and 3.3.1; Daily Times, February 21, 1973). H.K. Biney obtained for himself a Lagos chieftancy and seems to have run his company as feudal or tribal polity (Nkamare 1964). He evidently considered himself the father of his workers, encouraged them to approach him per-

sonally, played them off against his own senior staff. He also encouraged the development of a union (at least amongst the junior supervisory workers), and assisted successive union presidents to make the haj (pilgrimage) to Mecca. Whilst there may seem to be a contradiction between the desire to retain or encourage personal relations and the sponsoring of unions, it was a combination of the two that was Biney's own formula for the control of his labour force and the prevention of collective protest.

The company-centred and personalised labour relations ideology of Biney evidently could not be reproduced at industrial level. Although it failed at the time, the attempt to create an industry-level industrial relations ideology in the mid-1960s was significant for the future. It was the personal vision of the contractor U.U. Nkamare (1964), and found expression in the short-lived Association of Nigerian Dock Labour Contractors (ANDLC to Urhobo Tribunal, April 19, 1969). Nkamare had studied in the United States and been a Port Labour Officer within the Ministry of Labour. His was a nationalist entrepreneur's vision, proposing a radical restructuring of the industry, stabilisation of employment, rationalisation of union structure, isolation of Nigerian unions from their foreign trade union sponsors, and inculcation of a class-collaboration and nation-building ideology amongst union leaders. Much of this programme was achieved in the late-1970s with the creation of the ICHS and the administrative restructuring of the Nigerian unions.

We can make related distinctions between regulations and institutions at the two levels. Biney has a preference for sittings 'under the shade of the mango tree' at his own mansion (Biney Minutes, January 13, 16, 17, 1969). These take more the nature of a royal court than a bargaining session. The more formal type of negotiations structures have never really taken root at Biney's. Between the 'traditional' court which functioned and the 'modern' institutions that remained on paper we can find the 'industrial relations consultant', Chief O.A. Fagbenro Beyioku. Beyioku is an ex-NPA union leader and politician who acts as a paid consultant both to Biney and to the Biney Staff Association (BSA). Although Beyioku's role depends on the continued confidence of both management and union, he receives twice as much money from the former. And he was clearly playing for Biney the role of a salaried industrial relations officer within the NPA.

Most striking at the industrial level during our period is the lack of coordination, coherence and direction in industrial relations policy. In large part this was due to the breakdown of earlier efforts to create a dock-level structure on the national pattern and the Anglo-Saxon model. This collapse was a

result of the 1968 dock strike, which was as much against the Western-backed and state-sponsored union as against the employers and state themselves (Urhobo Report 1971). Given the development of an unrecognised but radical general union amongst the dockers, and given the consequent strike waves of the 1970s, the contractors, the Ministry of Labour, the NPA and the police were all forced to respond. Whilst the contractors always attempted to pass the buck to the NPA - as principal - they were occasionally forced to deal with the radical union collectively. The Ministry satisfied itself with the repetition of formalities and homilies on free collective bargaining, whilst attempting repeatedly to breath life into the discredited moderates. But it was also occasionally forced to deal directly with the effective leadership. Unlike the Ministry, the NPA could not hide behind legalities. It was prepared, once worker complaints were translated into industrial action, to obtain and impose new pay rates. The police, finally, were forced by the ineffectivity of the other agencies, to play an active role in dock labour relations. This implied spying, threatening potential or actual strike leaders, beating, teargassing and arresting strikers. Despite the incoherence of action by the various state agencies, they do have characteristics in common. These are 1) continual reference to laws, regulations and institutions, even when - as with collective bargaining - they had no real existence in the docks; 2) the ineffective application of such laws and procedures as did exist, either against the employers or against the unions; 3) the pragmatic acceptance of union power, even when this meant de facto recognition of the feared militants and their unacceptable argument that dock wages had always been settled between unions and government directly.

NOTES

1. This chapter draws on Waterman (1982) but has been extended to cover development in the 1970s. For a more detailed treatment, see Waterman (1979h: Chs. 1, 2, 3).

# Chapter 3
# NPA AND DOCK LABOUR: A DIRECT COMPARISON

The contrast between the conditions of the least-privileged portworkers (hire-and-fire, daily-paid) and the most-privileged dockworkers (contractor staff, pool labour) is evidently sharp enough. When we consider that between the typical portworker (manual or clerical) and the typical dockworker (pool or general labour, more-regularly or less-regularly employed), it would seem appropriate to talk of a gulf. These are two different worlds of wage labour. Firstly, there is the nature of the task itself. Most dock work is physical labour of the simplest and most primitive kind; most port work requires skill and literacy. Then there is the extent and nature of the division of labour. Dock labour is divided into a relatively few categories and levels; port labour is divided into hundreds of designations and tens of skill levels. The homogeneity of dock labour and heterogeneity of port labour lies, however, in the nature of the task, not in the nature of the labour force nor in the unit of employment. The labour force in the docks is evidently divided by the number and types of employer, as well as by ethnicity. The port labour force is under one single employer, and united by literacy and the common use of English. The exercise of power over dock labour is direct, personal and arbitrary; that over port labour is formalised and limited by both bureaucratic procedures and liberal-democratic norms. The difference between the working conditions and benefits of the two sectors hardly needs emphasising. Perhaps it shows itself most clearly in the relative staff turnover: possibly 40 percent amongst dockworkers (if we base ourselves on the monthly four percent at Biney's), less than one percent in the NPA.

The comparison and contrast so far, however, has been based mostly on labour considered as a force of production, and mostly on sources made available by, or gleaned from, management. The comparison, moreover, has inevitably been indirect. A possibility for a more direct comparison is provided by a survey carried out in August 1975. This not only permits a more systematic comparison, it also permits us to fill in certain gaps in the previous sources, and to consider the two labour

forces more sociologically - as segments of an emerging working class.

The Port and Dockworker Survey (see Appendix 1) was intended to compare the social and organisational characteristics of dockworkers and portworkers. Dockworkers were defined to include both pool and general labour, but to exclude contractor staff. Port labour was defined to include Grades D and E (70-80 percent of Port Staff), but to exclude the causal and daily paid (20-30 percent) and higher grades of even junior staff. The intention was to compare the central and typical categories within the two sectors - the contract dock labourer and the manual or clerical portworker. Secondly, the survey was confined within NPA to the Traffic and Engineering Departments (80 percent of Lagos Port staff), and within the docks to pool labour (eight percent of registered labour) and the labour of three large NPA contractors on the regular quays with different areas of origin within Nigeria (40 percent of registered labour). Thus excluded were stevedoring-only contractors, and all 'jetty' labour. These decisions were taken for practical reasons, neither time nor finance permitting sampling from the total populations. Given the uncertainty of even NPA labour statistics, it was decided to assume in each industrial sector a total population of 10,000 and to draw a rough five percent sample from each. Although 194 NPA workers and 206 dockworkers were surveyed, these were not in proportion to the NPA occupational groups, nor to the labour force within the different dock groupings. Moreover, selection of interviewees was on a non-systematic basis, rather than by rigorous random sampling. The questions were written in an English comprehensible to a primary-educated Lagosian, then translated by native speakers into Yoruba and Hausa. The survey was carried out in these languages or in 'the general language' (the term preferred to 'Pidgin' by those who use it) by an experienced Lagos University graduate, assisted by two native Yoruba- and Hausa-speaking secondary school students. Coding and tabulating were done by hand. The restricted nature of the two populations, the non-representativity of the samples, and the crudity of the interviewee selection make it impossible to produce confident generalisations about 'the portworker' or 'the dockworker', or to seek statistical relations between answers.

Before reporting on the survey results, let us again make clear to whom they refer. The two NPA categories distinguished are the permanently-employed manual and clerical workers in the two lowest salary grades within the Traffic and Engineering Departments. The 112 clerical workers are overwhelmingly Quay Staff II from the Traffic Department, plus a few general clerks from Engineering. The 82 manual workers consist for 33 percent of unskilled porters and labourers (mostly from Traffic), 13 percent semi-skilled and 48

percent skilled workers (all from Engineering). The clerical workers are mostly engaged in filling or checking the dozen or more forms involved in the loading or unloading, storing, delivery, import and export, pilotage and 'parking' of ships. Most of them are at the bottom of at least the clerical hierarchy (they may be giving orders to NPA manual labourers or dockworkers). They sit at the end of the noisy and dusty sheds of the NPA, under the supervision of senior clerks, endlessly engaged in a largely unnecessary process of form-filling and paper-chasing (in Ghana the endless copies are avoided by use of a single-sheet Dual Purpose Delivery Order). The porters and labourers are largely involved in fetching, carrying and cleaning tasks not very different from those of the dock workers. The semi-skilled and skilled workers from Engineering are mostly maintenance men, involved in the repairing of cranes, forklift trucks and other vehicles belonging to the NPA. Many of them are carrying out their specialised and non-routine tasks at their own pace and without too close supervision. We will later see that the Mechanical Workshop was to play an innovating role within NPA unionism.

The 204 dockworkers are divided into two categories, pool labour and contract labour employed on the quays by three NPA contractors. The pool labour subdivides into 13 tally clerks and 40 securitymen (thus under-representing the clerks). The contract labour was employed by Akere, a western Yoruba contractor (53 respondents), Mainland, of south-eastern Efik origin (68), and Ramallam, of northern Hausa origin (31). The tally clerks work on ship, shore or in sheds, checking the descriptions and quantities of goods being shifted by the labourers. The securitymen are supposed to prevent theft from ships. Both are forced through under-employment to spend much of their time in the shed used for the pool by the PLO. The pool is thus also an information pool and place for discussion amongst men who work in every corner of the port. The contract labourers are more identified with a particular employer, or a particular headman and gang. They are for the most part simple porters, shifting loads with their hands, on their backs, or with handtrucks. The headmen amongst them work along with the gangs. Only the winchmen, operating the ships' winches, have powered equipment at their disposal.

The survey may permit us to establish an initial image of certain main types of worker in the two sectors and to consider certain hypotheses about them. It also requires us to be sceptical of <u>any</u> attempt to generalise about 'dockworkers' and 'portworkers'. The internal heterogeneity of the two categories was confirmed by a first analysis of the results. For both this reason, and because of the nonrepresentativity of the samples, the data below is presented in terms of separate categories for each of the sectors.

The NPA Clerk: This is the only group with a substantial proportion of wage-earning fathers (and thus the only group with a substantial proportion of second-generation wage-earners), but this whole 36 percent of fathers are white-collar workers. The majority of the clerks are from non-wage-earner families, 19 percent of their fathers being petty-traders or craftsmen and 39 percent farmers. Half of the eldest brothers, however, are wage earners, 42 percent being white-collar workers. In terms of region of origin, these are overwhelmingly southern Nigerians, only three percent coming from the six northern states. Almost half come from the three eastern states, just over one-third from the west and under one-quarter from Lagos itself. The low proportion of northerners is certainly in part due to the distance of the north from Lagos and the under-development of education there. The high proportion from the east is less easy to explain. By way of comparison, a general survey of non-elite Lagos residents revealed the following proportions: Lagos, one-quarter; west, 34 percent; mid-west, 14 percent; eastern states, 18 percent; north, seven percent (Peil 1973).

Half of the clerks are in the 25-39 age group, most of the rest (39 percent) being under 25. The relative youth of the clerks tends to lend weight to evidence that this is a temporary occupation for school-leavers with 'their eyes and their minds elsewhere'.

The clerks are, in fact, the most educated of the four groups, averaging 12 years education. 77 percent have secondary education and 16 some kind of post-school training. A secondary school leaving certificate is now a requirement for clerical positions at NPA, so this 77 percent must have actually completed secondary school.

What of work experience and job stability? For two-thirds of the clerks the NPA has been the sole employer, over three-quarters have never lost a job or been unemployed, and 62 percent have been employed within their present industry for under six years. It is hardly surprising that the relatively young clerks have less experience of other employment, less experience of job loss and a shorter experience in NPA than others. The small proportion with long experience, however, may in part be explained by a greater mobility upwards within NPA (most senior posts requiring clerical rather than manual skills), or outwards from it. The advancement opportunity for clerks within wage employment is familiar to students of Nigerian labour (see Williams 1976:38-9).

What can we add to what we already know of wages and conditions? The clerks average N94.80 per month, or

N3.64 per day (if we divide by 26). This puts them well above the dockworkers, but well below the NPA manual workers. Half of them are paying N10.14 per month rent, whilst 26 percent are paying more, and half of them are paying 40-70 kobo daily in fares. The significance of this will come out when we make comparisons below. A clerical family background, secondary education and clerical employment appears to be correlated with a certain present way of life. Thus, whilst a high 44 percent of married clerk's wives are solely housewives, an exceptionally high 22 percent are wage-earners - all white collar. A low 17 percent are engaged in crafts and petty trade. Best friends are overwhelmingly white-collar workers (79 percent), negligible proportions being found elsewhere. Just over three-quarters of the clerks are members of the 'respectable' colonial christian churches (for which, see Lloyd 1967:262), only 17 percent being muslim and a negligible proportion non-believers. The high proportion of protestants and catholics is no doubt influenced in part by the fact that secondary education in Nigeria has mostly been in the hands of christian missions. In terms of mother tongue, Ibo predominates (47 percent), being followed by Yoruba (30 percent), Edo (13 percent) and Efik (eight percent). At work, however, the clerks are naturally almost 100 percent English speakers.

The NPA Manual Worker: This group is overwhelmingly of non-industrial origin, 61 percent of fathers being farmers and 17 percent craftsmen and petty-traders. Only 20 percent have wage-earner fathers, these - interestingly enough - being equally divided between clerical and manual employ. In this case just under half of eldest brothers are wage-earners, with clerks (31 percent) greatly predominating over manual workers (14 percent). In terms of family background, this group is hardly more proletarian than the clerks.

The region of origin shows similar proportions to the clerks as far as the north (five percent) and Lagos (22 percent) are concerned, but there is a more equal balance between west (24 percent) and the three eastern states (29 percent).

Whilst around half of the manual workers are, like the clerks, in the 25-39 age group, 36 percent are above. They are thus much older than the clerks.

Although the manual workers average only nine years of education (three less than the clerks), and the majority (56 percent) have only primary schooling, 22 percent have had some kind of post-school training. This would be required for certain skilled posts at NPA.

What of work experience and job stability? These workers have much more experience of other employment

(66 percent) and of unemployment (33 percent) but over half of them have been with NPA for more than 10 years. They thus have greater experience both of wage-employment in general and of the NPA itself. They would also seem to be more attached to NPA - possibly because of the lack of promotion opportunities and/or of attractive possibilities outside the corporation.

The manual workers are averaging N146.70 per month (N5.64 per day) - which is some 50 percent more than the clerks. This cannot be due only to the difference in wage scale between a Quay Staff II and a skilled manual worker, since this is not very significant. It is probably also due to the fact that most of the manual workers would be at the top of their scale whilst most of the clerks would be near the bottom of theirs. Annual increments can add 20 percent or more to the minimum on each scale. The manual workers are paying rents and fares in the same ranges as the clerks. 61 percent are paying rent of N10-14 per month, whilst 21 percent are paying more, and half of them are paying 40-70 kobo per day in fares. It appears that whilst the majority of clerks are paying 11-15 percent of monthly wages on rent and 11-19 percent of daily pay on fares, the majority of manual workers are paying 7-10 percent and 7-12 percent respectively.

To what extent, however, does the way of life of manual workers vary from that of the clerks? Whilst a comparable proportion of wives (39 percent) are housewives only, almost half (45 percent) are in crafts and petty-trading, and only nine percent in wage labour - overwhelmingly white collar. The higher proportion in petty-entrepreneurship may again be due to age, since it is women with grown children (to look after smaller ones) who have more opportunity for other occupations. The low proportion in wage employment is certainly due to the lower educational levels of manual workers' wives: there is as yet little call from the wage sector in Lagos for other than white-collar labour from women. As for best friends, the majority are in wage labour, more or less evenly divided between clerical work (35 percent) and manual work (32 percent). Another 21 percent are petty-entrepreneurs. It would seem that whilst clerks might well be incorporated into a clerical worker network, NPA manual workers are far from incorporated into one of manual workers. As far as religion is concerned, we find smaller proportions in the 'respectable' christian churches (67 percent) and a larger proportion of muslims (27 percent). These different proportions are evidently related to ethnicity, since amongst the manual workers there is a greater proportion of the more-muslim Yoruba (44 percent) than of the mostly-christian Ibo (27 percent). At work, a smaller proportion claim to speak Pidgin and seven percent Yoruba. In reality the percentage of Pidgin speaking is likely to be higher, given that this is the

normal language of the primary educated in Southern Nigeria, even if they do not care to admit it.

The Pool Dockworkers: As with the NPA manual workers, 78 percent of the fathers are non-industrial. Far less are in wage employment (eight percent) - overwhelmingly clerical. A similar proportion of eldest brothers are in wage employment (42 percent), but with a bigger proportion in manual occupations (18 percent). The difference from the manual portworker is thus not so striking.

The region of origin is more distinctively different. There are, as with both previous groups, few northerners (six percent), but also few easterners (also six percent). The sector is dominated by westerners (39 percent) and Lagosians (28 percent). The low proportions of northerners and easterners are suggestive of a monopolisation of opportunities here by Yoruba indigenes - a matter to be returned to below.

As far as age is concerned, half are also in the 25-39 group. All the other half are 40 or older. This is again suggestive of a monopolisation of the relatively-privileged pool positions by early comers. It may also be that older men can easily continue in the non-strenuous pool jobs. This category claims an average of seven years education, little under that of the NPA manuals. This comparatively high level is due to the fact that over half (57 percent) claim secondary education. It is evident that this could not have been completed, otherwise they would have been in more regular employ.

Whilst a high 87 percent have experience outside dock labour, and 44 percent have been unemployed (as distinct from being under-employed within dock labour), an exceptionally high 61 percent have been over 10 years in the industry. However, the difference from manual portworkers still appears to be one of degree.

The gap becomes a chasm only when we come to living standards. Poolworkers average N2.50 per day, or N65 if working a 26-day month. On this basis pay is less than half of what an NPA manual worker gets, but over three-quarters of what an NPA clerk does. As we know, however, many dockworkers do not get a full month's work. We can still consider rents and fares on the assumption of full employment. Whilst 39 percent of pool workers were paying under N10 per month rent, half were paying rents in the same range as half the portworkers, N10-14. Half were also paying fares in the same range as half the portworkers, 40-70 kobo. But, in this case, rent is equal to 15-22 percent of the full month's income and fares are equal to 15-22 percent of the daily one. Given the endemic under-employment of even poolworkers, the majority of them must be spending

at least 30-50 percent of earnings on housing and transport alone!

To what extent does this difference in living standards find expression in the poolworkers' way of life? Only 14 percent of wives are solely engaged in housework - the lowest of all four groups by far. A negligible number are in wage labour (six percent) - mostly clerks. And an exceptionally high 79 percent are engaged in petty-trading and crafts. While age might make this possible, the low and irregular income of husbands would seem to make it necessary.

As for best friends, a greater proportion is in wage employment than amongst NPA manual workers, but whilst almost the same proportion are manual workers (34 percent), almost half of total friends are white-collar workers (46 percent). Only 15 percent are petty-entrepreneurs. No easy explanation comes to mind for this distribution.

Whilst a lesser proportion than the portworkers are catholics and protestants (53 percent), a larger proportion are muslim (31 percent) and a small but not insignificant number (12 percent) belong to the 'low-class' Nigerian christian churches or sects, such as the cherubim and seraphim. Whilst the higher proportion of Muslims is explained by region of origin, membership of the sects may represent a deliberate rejection of the high-class established churches (see Lloyd 1974: 200).

The poolworkers are overwhelmingly Yoruba (72 percent), the only other group significantly represented being the mid-western Edo (22 percent). Whilst 13 percent claim to speak mostly Yoruba at work, 81 percent claim to speak English (again, probably Pidgin), and another seven percent Pidgin. This is the group in which a single ethnicity most predominates. However, the high proportion of English/Pidgin speakers prevents this group from being cut off from communication with each other or with the portworkers.

The Experienced Dockworker on the Quays: Fathers are distributed as with the poolworkers, 64 percent being farmers, 16 percent in petty-entrepreneurship, seven percent in wage employment - as usual mostly as clerks.

This category shows the lowest proportion of native Lagosians (10 percent) and a fairly even distribution between easterners (26 percent), westerners (31 percent) and - for the first time - northerners (28 percent). The high proportion of easterners is due to the special composition of the workers for Mainland, and the northern proportion is lower than it would have been in the northern dry season and if jetty labour had

been surveyed. The relatively low proportion of Lagosians suggests the low status of dockwork in their eyes.

Half are, as usual, in the 25-39 age group, but whilst only 21 are over 39, 28 percent are under 25. This makes them much younger than the poolworkers.

With an average of only four years education, this category has almost equal numbers with primary education (47 percent) and with none at all (43 percent). The educational distance from the poolworkers is great enough, that from the portworkers is enormous.

This group has considerable experience of other employment (58 percent) and unemployment (44 percent), and half of them have been employed in the docks for under five years. Whilst their employment and unemployment experience is comparable with that of the poolworkers and manual portworkers, they have a much shorter experience in their present job.

The general dockworker averages N2.34 per day, or N60.84 in a 26-day month. Whilst we know that such a 26-day month is purely hypothetical, we will still assume full employment in order to assess living costs. Half are paying under N10 rent, half are once again paying N10-14, and half are again paying 40-70 kobo fares. In this case rent is equal to 16-23 percent of the full monthly wage, and fares to 17-30 percent of the daily one. This group is in its majority thus spending at least 33-53 percent of earnings on housing and transport! Since we can assume that the general dockworker is less employed than the poolworker, the gap between them may be somewhat larger. But the distance from the portworker must again put them in another world.

Is their social world that different either from the port or from the poolworkers? Whilst a considerable proportion of wives (65 percent) are in petty-trading and crafts, almost one-third are housewives only. Almost none are in wage employment. Again, the relatively high proportion of housewives may be explained by the age factor. The difference from the poolworker is one of degree. The general dockworkers have a lower proportion of best friends in wage employ than the poolworkers (54 percent), but they have the highest of all four groups in manual employ (34 percent). They have 26 percent in crafts and petty-trading, and are the only group to claim a significant number in farming (10 percent). Again the differences seem to be only slight.

As for religion, muslims are in a majority (57 percent), protestants/catholics being only 39 percent - more or less reversing the proportions for poolworkers.

Only five percent belong to the christian sects. Both the high proportion of muslims and the low proportion of sect members is probably explained by the lesser urbanisation of this category.

The majority of the general dockworkers are again Yoruba (61 percent), a significant proportion being Efik (16 percent), Hausa and Ibo accounting for nine percent each. The high proportion of Efik is again accounted for by Mainland, and the low proportion of Hausa by the factors mentioned for northerners in general earlier. At work, however, a majority speaks Yoruba (56 percent), 26 percent claiming (dubiously) English and 14 percent Pidgin. It is noteworthy that even our more-experienced sample of dockworkers produces only 40 percent of English/Pidgin speakers. Whilst we cannot assume that the other 60 percent understands no English, it is evident also from the percentage without schooling, that a high proportion of even the more-experienced general dockworkers may be cut off from communication with the three other categories. However, they are not so much cut off from these categories (amongst whom those speaking Yoruba or Hausa can easily be found), as from their fellow workers. This is even more true of communication with and amongst the jetty labour, which we have not so far considered.

Before attempting to summarise the survey, it may be worthwhile adding a little extra evidence about this important missing category. After all, whilst the poolworkers are important both for their role as a leadership base and as a sociological link between ordinary dockers and others, they represent only a tiny proportion of the dock labour force as a whole. What I have called 'jetty labour' however, represents a very considerable proportion. At Biney's 41 percent work on the Sea School Jetty, and in late 1976 a considerable proportion of this 'savanah-sahel' labour was also working on the regular quays. The evidence concerning this type of labour is not closely comparable and is based on no more than two or three individual or group interviews carried out on Sea School Jetty or Force Road Jetty in late-1976. The interviews were with two headmen and one labourer from Niger, with a Hausa headman from Zaria and with a group of labourers from near Gao in Mali. All the interviews but one were in French. An attempt will be made to present it here in an order that does make some kind of comparison possible with the already-described groups.

The Migrant Dockworker on the Jetties: In terms of background, all but the Hausa headman came from farming or herding families, in which in most cases brothers are similarly engaged. With the exception of the two headmen, who appeared to be aged between 30 and 40, and one who was older than this, all were under 25. All but

the Hausa were illiterate in the colonial languages, although several were literate in Arabic. Even the French-speaking headmen could not write, although they could count and sign their names. A few mentioned the sahel drought (for which see Meillassoux 1974) as the reason they had left home to seek work and money. Whilst for most of the labourers this was the first experience of employment, one or two had worked in cities as petty-traders previously. Two headmen had experience as dockers in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. The Hausa had worked as a seaman and could swear like one. Most of the workers expressed their intention to work for just a few months before returning to their farms. Two headmen made N80 in 12-hour shifts during one month on the Sea School Jetty. One made N140 working 9-10 24-hour shifts on the Force Road Jetty. Labourers reported earning N3-4 for a 12-hour shift or 8-10 for a 24-hour one. Two of the headmen were paying N10-11 for their rooms, one was staying free with a friend. Most of the labourers were sleeping in compounds, behind stores or under bridges with village or ethnic brothers. They were either paying nothing or 10-20 kobo fares to the jetties, sometimes coming but not finding work. Many were living on the jetties themselves, either completely unprotected or in makeshift straw, stick, cardboard and plastic constructions. Those living on the jetty would wait till their names were called for work before sending one of their number to buy 5-10 kobo of meat and garri for each to take on the lighters. All were without exception muslim, and one headman reported that many workers turned to the mallam (a learned man and spiritual leader) also with their non-spiritual problems (c.f. Lubeck 1975a,1975b). The Hausa headman communicated with his superiors in English, with his (ethnically-mixed) labour in their own tongues, and with their supervisors in Hausa. The isolation of this type of docker from the rest and from the general population in Lagos was emphasised by their complaints concerning the behaviour toward them not only of their supervisors but also of the food-sellers and others on the jetties, 'who won't even let you drink water from the pipe', and 'who treat us like dogs'.

Let us now try to summarise all the new evidence we have. It is clear that there is a major difference in living standards between even the best-off dockworkers and the poorer portworkers. It is clear, also that there is a major difference between background and way of life of the NPA clerks - much surrounded by a white-collar network and culture - and the bulk of the dockworkers, on the quays or on the jetties. In fact, the clerks appear by these tokens isolated also from the NPA manual workers. But the NPA clerks and manual workers have much else in common. The educational gap is not so great, and they share a common language. Whilst one can find similar common features in the way

of life of dockworkers in the pool and on the quays, and whilst the living-standard gap between them may be less than between the two NPA groups, they do not really share a single language. And when we reach jetty labour we find a group as distinct as the clerks, and at the other extreme of a whole series of axes - urban-rural, southern-northern, literate-illiterate, Anglophone-non-Anglophone, etc. Evidence of the portworker-dockworker gap is here in abundance. But this must not be permitted to conceal the significant differences between portworkers, or between dockworkers, nor the considerable linkages that exist between the way of life of at least the manual portworkers and the dockworkers in the pool.

# Chapter 4
# DISCUSSION, SHAPING, DIVIDING AND CONTROLLING

Although the two previous chapters are meant - like the first - to serve primarily as background for what follows, their largely descriptive character does call for some interpretation. This will be carried out in the terms indicated in Section 4 of the Introduction. Some key concepts will be briefly explained, but any more extensive theorisation will be reserved for the introductory chapters of the following parts of this study. The three areas to be considered will be those of industrial structure and organisation, of labour relations and of the labour force.

## 4.1. TNCs, local capital and state

The absence of the transnational companies (TNCs) from either of our two sectors during this period should not conceal their symbiotic relationship with foreign capital. This is not only in the sense that both NPA and contractors provide a crucial service to foreign- or Nigerian-based shipping or industrial TNCs. It is also a matter of their historical origins and continuing dependency. Ever since colonial times foreign capital has wanted the Nigerian state to bear the costs (from taxes on peasant production) of a low- or non-profit service to themselves. In the NPA case it has been primarily an interest in avoiding the massive investment and running costs. The interest in a local capitalist contractor sector was probably twofold. In the first place, it seems likely that the shipping companies did not wish to be confronted with controlling a mass of low-paid, unskilled and uncommitted labour. In the second place, by divulging themselves of this task they could also stimulate the growth of a local capitalist stratum too weak to challenge them yet sharing their fundamental values.[1]

What of the relationship between the state and capitalist sector in the Port? The state sector was the first and best developed in Nigeria and has always provided the major basis and stimulus for local capitalist development. The creation of the Integrated Cargo-Handling Scheme (ICHS) and the National Cargo-Handling Company (NCHC) appears to have been a movement

in the other direction. The different attitudes of state officials expressed here have been interpreted in terms of a conflict between generalist and professional-technocratic administrators (Turner 1978; Williams and Turner 1978), a conflict that was taking place more broadly in Nigeria at this time. However, this victory for the latter fraction within the bureaucracy must be qualified in two ways. In the first place, it was a comparatively easy victory: neither the contractors nor their bureaucratic sponsors were willing or able to fight openly for the continuation of the old pattern. In the second place, state action was not against capitalism but against petty-capitalism. Alongside the NCHC it in fact created four capitalist concerns out of the 20-30 that had previously existed. The possibility of corrupt relations between administrators and contractors therefore remained.

The anarchy, waste, corruption, inefficiency and foreign dependency of the Lagos cargo-handling industry at this period should not be considered obstacles to its development in Nigeria, nor as symptomatic of some deviation from an abstract model of capitalist or bureaucratic behaviour and development. If the industry appears to be suffering from 'underdevelopment', then it is as a result of the production of such underdevelopment by (and in) the industrialised capitalist industries, states and international agencies themselves. What we are looking at is the manner in which capitalist development is occurring in Nigeria.

Before moving on to the matter of labour relations, we need to recognise that these include what we have been dealing with above. We cannot take the ownership pattern as a given setting, level or structure within which - or beneath which - labour relations occur. Both the number of changes identified and the manner of their occurrence require us to remember that labour relations in the industry begin here. Conflicts over NPA inefficiency or the restructuring of the dock labour sector were not simply between different fractions of the bureaucracy, between bureaucrats and capitalists, or between foreign and local capitalists. They were also struggles obetween capital and state on the one hand and labour on the other. This is not only in the sense that the Beckley Tribunal had to come to terms with resistance to bureaucratic norms within NPA, or that the ICHS was a response to decades of dockworker rebellion. It is also in the sense that control and organisation became - as we will later see in detail - issues for the unions in both sectors. In both the above cases, however, we must recognise that 1) the labour-capital contradiction did not predominate, 2) labour's positions did not go beyond or outside the terms proposed by capital and state, and 3) these struggles were carried out independently of each other by the two major fractions of labour in the industry.

## 4.2 Labour-control strategy

Whilst we must speak of ownership and organisation as crucial aspects of labour relations, we now have to consider the latter in its more conventional sense. Although the conventional term used for this is 'industrial relations' I prefer to speak of the 'labour-control strategy' proposed or practised by capital and state. This is to avoid the aura of science and norm of compromise that inevitably surround the traditional liberal term, and also because I wish to examine the capitalist project in this area (Waterman 1979h: Introduction, Section 3.4). It is evident that labour-control strategies will vary not only between successive phases of capitalist development in one social formation, but also between formations in the present capitalist-dominated world, between particular modes within one formation, and particular sectors within one mode.[2] The three national-level strategies to be mentioned here (or which already have been earlier) are the non-interventionist, competitive type associated with the ideology of laissez faire, the liberal-paternalist one of positive state intervention in economy, welfare and conflict-regulation, and the corporatist one which only recognises a labour interest as subordinate to an all-encompassing state.

Within a national Nigerian setting marked by a certain movement from a liberal-paternalist to a corporatist labour-control strategy, and with this new strategy meeting vigorous local-level worker resistance, what was happening within the Port?

Within the NPA, the liberal-paternalist pattern was continuing to develop throughout this period. And it has been suggested that despite challenges there was no generalised breakdown of labour-control strategy within NPA at this time. The relative success of NPA strategy cannot be simply explained in terms of the relative privilege of its labour force. Both the success - and its evident limits in the mid-1970s - require reference to politics and ideology. The success, such as it was, should rather be seen as due to the following factors. Firstly, the NPA strategy was consistent with the traditional national one, thus giving it the legitimacy accruing to the 'neutral' state (if not to its 'greedy and corrupt' functionaries). Secondly, this traditional pattern was one approved by both Western unions and the ILO, which had high moral authority amongst Nigerian unionists. Thirdly, the notion of an NPA 'family' had been built up during the common struggle of senior and junior staff for Nigerianisation in the 1950s, and by the widespread and rapid promotions of the 1960s. The consequent individual mobility undermined collective mobilisation because even those left in the union or worker ranks could feel that they had friends in high places within NPA. The increasing

challenge to NPA control strategy in the 1970s was due - as we will later see - to developing contradictions here rather than to any simple economic factor.

Within the contractor sector we have to consider both the company level (as represented by Biney's) and the industrial one. We have seen how Biney's ideology of patronage was supplemented by institutions of a conventional liberal-paternalist type (unions plus at least the forms of collective bargaining), as well as one which seemed to bridge the two (the consultant). The inadequacy of the patron-client strategy within Biney's is due to the fact that it is transferred from a rural situation in which individualised clients are in a one-to-one and face-to-face relationship with the patron (c.f. Sandbrook 1975). The socialised nature of wage-work and the common large scale of industrial production are thus subversive of the bases of patron-client relations. The development of common protest action within Biney's required him to make gestures in a liberal-paternalist direction.

At industrial level we contrasted the aspirations of Nkamare with the incoherence in practice. Nkamare's was not only a nationalist-capitalist position but one which went beyond the current national strategy and in the direction of the corporativism of the 1970s. What took place at the dock labour industry level in practice was a conflict between different levels and instances of labour control. One can thus find elements of a laissez faire ideology, in which non-institutionalised conflict between dockers and contractors is being permitted, with the police being brought in to preserve life and property. The incoherence can be explained in terms of relations between the three major forces present: the state, the contractors and the labourers. In the first place, the liberal-paternalist strategy was inappropriate to the needs and capacities of either the petty-capitalists or the contract labourers. The Ministry of Labour was totally oriented toward the large-scale modern sector (class relations within which provide the historical stimulus to liberal-paternalist strategy). The petty-capitalists were too hostile to each other to combine - either with or against the capitalist Biney. And whilst the labourers were capable of articulating a forceful 'no', they were not yet capable of imposing a desired alternative. Thus, despite the militancy of the dock labour force, the Nigerian state could for most of this period afford incoherence in its control strategy.

If we contrast NPA strategy with that of our sample contractor, W.H.Biney, we would seem to have precisely that contrast between 'responsible autonomy' and 'direct control' identified by Andrew Friedman (1977:6). The first is reserved for those workers whose

skills, knowledge or control role make them crucial to management, and for those able by collective action to win this status. The second is reserved for those workers who do not have such skills or roles and who are unable to collectively defend themselves. However, one can accept such a conceptualisation only on recognition that there is no wage-labour relationship that does not include both these elements. At the 'bottom' end, Biney jetty labour is not only subjected to close supervision through headmen and supervisors, but also to significant ideological appeals. At the 'top' end, even senior NPA staff are subject to crude financial and disciplinary sanctions. A conceptualisation in terms of historically-rooted strategies may seem preferable, although we should also avoid opposing the patron-client strategy of Biney to the liberal-paternalism of the NPA management. 'Patron' and 'paternal', after all are etymologically linked with 'father', and both managements were concerned to present their enterprises as families, under the benevolent but strict control of a natural head.

## 4.3 Differential proletarianisation

In turning now to the workers we need to concentrate on the process of proletarianisation. I use this word to mean what capital attempts to do to labour - to reduce it to a factor of production, lacking in control over capital, means of production or the labour of others. The production of such a homogeneity amongst wage-labour in general actually requires a heterogeneity that disguises the process from individual workers and groups of workers. The increasing technical capacities and collective consciousness of workers over time requires that such heterogenisation be repeatedly reproduced. Let us consider this process by first comparing our two sectors and then examining each of them separately.

If wage-labour implies a general process of proletarianisation - a division between a decreasing minority of capitalists and a majority of proletarians - then we must note that in the NPA the capitalist is missing and that in the contractor sector the workers are not yet completely separated from other means of production. It is easy for us to see within NPA an opposition between some 9,500 workers and the three or four top managers with significant control over capital, means of production and the labour of others. Yet these top managers are not owners and the state they represent presents itself to the workers as either the neutral organ of Nigerian society or even the collectivist force within it. Whilst there would seem to be a classical capitalist-worker relationship in the contractor sector, we must note that 1) most owners were petty-capitalists, 2) they were all sub-contractors, mediating between their workers and their

principals, and 3) dock labourers were dependent to differing degrees on petty-commodity production - of their wives at home, of themselves in town, or as cyclical or one-time migrants from farming. Thus, even an initial specification of class relations suggests the complexities of the wage-labour relationship at the level of the industry. When we consider the internal differentiation of each labour force the picture becomes yet more complex.

Here it is necessary to explain the concepts of fraction, segment and stratum that have been developed precisely to deal with divisions within classes. By fractions I mean class elements involved in different economic instances within a social formation. The significant fractioning amongst workers is likely to be between economic sectors by ownership or scale, but can also be by product or activity. By segments I mean class elements distinguished by such non-economic criteria as region, tribe, religion or age. By strata I mean class elements with differential access to control over capital, means of production, labour power and - consequently - income (c.f. Post 1978:84-6).

The NPA workers belong to the fraction of the Nigerian working class employed by the state, this being the largest such fraction in Nigeria, and one enjoying considerable relative benefits and opportunities. The most significant fractioning amongst them is by department and designation due to a considerable overlap between department and designation (Harbours with 'floating staff', Engineering with manual workers, Traffic/ Operations with clerks), powerful bases for separate identities existed. Perhaps the major segmentation was the ethnic one - particularly where it was reinforced by department and/or designation, as with the 'floating staff'. As for stratification, this is highly developed and complex within NPA, involving employment status, skill/education and wages/conditions - although these are commonly correlated and mutually reinforcing. The only major division amongst NPA workers of which we have much direct evidence is that between the clerical and manual workers. This is a fractioning with a historical basis in stratification (mental/manual). Although in income terms the clerks today can hardly be considered a superior stratum, the historical origin of clerical labour, the family backgrounds of clerks, and their present incorporation into a white-collar culture, provides plentiful material for differential consciousness, organisation and action. This should not be understood as a division between middle-class clerks and proletarian labourers within NPA. The labour of the clerical workers is customarily more divided, standardised and routine than that of most NPA manual labourers. Part of NPA manual labour retains features of artisan production, with workers having considerable control over the labour process,

speed and quality of work (which is frequently of a non-standardised and non-repetitive type). Some workers even have their own tools. And, as we have seen, they are incorporated outside work into a petty-commodity rather than a working-class milieu. The major homogenising factors within NPA may have been not so much the traditional senior/junior gulf as the closing down of promotion possibilities and the consolidation of a bureaucratic, authoritarian and self-interested senior staff.

The contract workers belong to the small - if growing - fraction of the working class employed by local capital. If their common characteristic is their casual employment and partial proletarianisation, they are nonetheless significantly divided. The most obvious fractioning is by company and headman, with each offering somewhat different conditions. The second is by job, but here there are only four identified tasks rather than hundreds. Segmentation, however, is much more marked than in NPA, with ethnic differentiation between employers, gangs, worksites - and strata. Stratification by employment status is significant, with three categories between contractor staff workers at the top and jetty labour at the bottom. Jetty labour, moreover, was being paid on a piecework rather than a time basis. The major obstacle to homogenisation would seem to be the linguistic/ethnic segmentation, particularly where this overlaps with the more important employment status differences (pool, quay, jetty). The major stimulus to common consciousness, organisation and action is the common insecurity of the mass of labourers, and the relative lack of wage differentiation between employment strata and job designations.

One must hope that this treatment of the multiple divisions within each of our two labour forces will subvert the notion of a dichotomy between them. Further assistance in this task is provided by Bromley and Gerry (1979:5). Concerned precisely with breaking down the wage-employment/self-employment dichotomy, they offer the following spectrum of positions: 1) indefinite wage-work; 2) short-term wage-work; 3) disguised wage-work; 4) dependent work; 5) true self-employment. Since our contract workers fall under Category 2, we can see how close they stand to the 'indefinite wage-workers' who form the majority in the NPA. The closeness is due not only to the wage-form and the type of workplace, but also to the collective nature of most casual labour and (unlike the other three forms) its common recognition as wage-work in law.

What we have so far been looking at is the attempt of capital and state to shape, divide and control the wage-labour force. This is not a matter of capitalist conspiracy, nor of a common project of capitalists and bureaucrats (since they usually conflict on this

issue). It lies in the nature of capital and state as forms. Capital - the commodity form - implies division of labour, individualisation, competition, hierarchies of knowledge and power. The state as a form provides both the basis for the reproduction of capital and the means for concealing/overcoming market anarchy. This implies the necessity for repeatedly re-dividing the mass of labouring people, who potentially or actually threaten to reconnect the 'economic' and the 'political' and to thus distribute social control amongst themselves.

Having looked at the capital-labour relationship from the side of capital, and having seen what this implies for the multiple divisioning of labour, let us now consider the division/unity dialectic from the side of labour - in terms of its union organisation and its collective protest action.

NOTES

1. For an analogous relationship in the early 20th century Nigeria, consider the use of contractors and contract labour in railway construction (Mason 1979). In this case, of course, the principal was the colonial state.

2. The concept 'social formation' is not a critical one for this study yet requires at least some specification. It refers to the historically concrete and specific combinations of modes of production (slave, feudal, capitalist, etc.) that can be identified in the past or present-day world. Says Martha Harnecker (1974: 132):

> This concrete, historically-determined, social totality, may correspond to a particular country or to a series of countries with a common history and more or less similar characteristics. One can thus speak of the Chilean or Mexican formation, etc., as well as of the Latin American social formation. (My translation. PW).

I would not myself use the term of a particular country, a category primarily determined by the state. I might use it of a series of countries, insofar as such a grouping would be determined - as Latin America is - by a multiplicity of common forces and by a common position within the world capitalist system. How I do, in practice, use it here and below is for the three major socio-political-economic groups within the world today - more familiar as the first, second and third worlds.

PART II

EXTERNAL RELATIONS: UNION ATTITUDES AND STRATEGIES TOWARD CAPITAL AND STATE

Chapter 5: Theoretical introduction: unions, capital and state

Chapter 6: Portworker unionism: the surpassing of grades-and-trades demands

Chapter 7: Dockworker unionism: moderate impotence, radical suicide

Chapter 8: Analysis: organising against the contours of capital

# Chapter 5
# THEORETICAL INTRODUCTION: UNIONS, CAPITAL AND STATE

Part II of this work is concerned with the 'external relations' of the unions, with how they relate to capital and state. It considers union strategy (or leadership ideology), the levels and types of worker organisation. The basis is a survey of organisations in each sector, presented in historical perspective. This permits us to see the changes that occurred over a decade or so. Whilst we will inevitably touch on the 'internal relations' of the unions and on collective protest action, detailed treatment of these is reserved for Parts III and IV respectively.

The conceptualisation presented in this chapter may be more than is needed to cover the subject matter of Part II. What it is intended to do is to provide a synthesis of labour movement theory. As such it will not only provide a source for the analysis carried out in Chapter 8, but a historical and social context within which our subject matter can be placed. It will also provide a source for analysis in later parts of this work.

In what follows we will consider in turn 1) the general phenomenon of trade unionism, 2) its historical development internationally, 3) the socio-political contexts of union activity, 4) its socio-economic contexts, 5) levels of worker struggle, 6) types of organisation, and 7) leadership strategies. Before beginning this theoretical exposition some explanation of the exercise might be in order. Each separate piece of conceptualisation provides us not simply with tools but also with standards - explicit or implicit. These standards are intended to be future-oriented without being teleological. This means that they are recognised as being persuasive in nature, but that the future possibilities or necessities suggested are rooted in study of working-class history. It is hoped that they will prove in application to reveal latent possibilities within the movement studied. Secondly, a word of justification for the order of presentation. It could be reasonably argued that the order should be reversed, or that one should start with points 5 and 6, since these are 'closer' to the subject matter. I have,

however, followed another logic - of moving from the most general statements and the longest historical view to the local and particular. It is no doubt true that the workers in this study are unaware of being part of an international labour movement, or of a process of struggle to overcome capitalist exploitation and state oppression. But I wish both to argue that they are such a part, and to recognise the precise nature and significance of their non-awareness of this. I hope that my order of presentation will assist such an analysis.

## 5.1. Trade unionism as a general phenomenon[1]

The initial and general marxist position on trade unions is thus expressed by Richard Hyman (1971:8):

> The evolution of industrial capitalism provides the preconditions of collective organisation by throwing workers together in large numbers, and creates the deprivations which spur them to combination. This unity, by transcending competition in the labour market, in itself threatens the stability of capitalism: it also develops workers' class consciousness and trains them in methods of struggle. The limited economic achievements of their unions lead workers to adopt political forms of action, and ultimately to challenge directly the whole structure of class domination.

However, he notes with Gramsci that trade unionism also reflects capitalist division and competition. It

> organises workers, not as producers but as wage-earners, that is as creations of the capitalist system of private property, as sellers of their labour power. Unionism unites workers according to the tools of their trade or the nature of their product, that is according to the contours imposed on them by the capitalist system. (Cited Hyman 1971:12)

Moreover, it is evident that capital and state are not neutral in the face of trade union development: they may either tempt or force the unions to directly serve them instead of the workers. Trotsky (1972:5) noted as a common feature of trade union development in the 1930s

> their drawing closer to and growing together with the state power. This is equally characteristic of the neutral, the Social-Democratic, the Communist and 'anarchist' trade unions.

These quotations provide us with an introduction to marxist conceptualisation and analysis of the basic and quasi-universal organisation of the working class. The initial one may be taken as a general one, i.e. meant to be true for the capitalist mode of production as a whole and for the historical epoch of struggle to overcome capitalism. The following ones embody a series of qualifications, revealing the obstacles to the movement of the working class from the basic and quasi-universal organisation (and forms of struggle) to those essential if they are to 'challenge the whole structure of class domination'. These suggest to me the necessity to consider such qualifications and obstacles in more detail.

## 5.2. Trade unionism as an international movement

It is necessary to periodise union struggle internationally in order 1) to be able to place the behaviour of the unions we are concerned with in terms of the international movement, and 2) to be able to understand the nature of international trade union influences on our particular organisations (a matter to be pursued in Part III). There can be identified three phases in the development of trade union internationalism:

> - an initial period...starting in about 1860, during which trade union and political organisations participated jointly in an internationalisation of the working-class movement;
> - a second period from about 1890 during which separate attempts were made to achieve trade-union internationalisation at the level of national central organisations and branch/industrial unions;
> - a third period from about 1965 characterised by the introduction of new forms of trade union internationalisation at the level of the corporation or business (in addition to the traditional dual structure). (Olle and Schoeller 1977:59)

For the particular place and time we are concerned with, only the second phase is crucial. Mention of the nature of the first one is however, necessary to put the second one in historical perspective. The common concern and joint action of socialist parties and trade unions during the first period was in the legalisation of worker organisation and protest action. The very achievement of the right to organise, strike and bargain within specific nation states at different times implied 1) a loss of interest in the international means for achieving it and 2) a separation between the industrial and the political within the workers' movements, in terms of organisation, consciousness and

action. During the second period we therefore see the creation of purely union internationals:

> Whereas in the previous period trade union internationalisation covered issues from the political rights of the worker to the representation of his economic interests, the economic interests themselves now come to the fore. (Olle and Schoeller 1977:62).

This confining of international trade union work

> To the field of representation of economic interest has determined the content and procedural form of trade union internationalisation ever since. (Ibid. Stress in original.

Olle and Schoeller stress that the nationalistic and economistic content and procedure was the fundamental feature of international trade unionism for the following 75 years or so. Except during periods of international economic downturn, there was no real progress in trade union internationalism. Even such organisational developments as the creation of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) and International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) in the post-World War II period led to no breakthrough in working-class internationalism. Generalising over this second period, the authors conclude (63) that 'the content of trade union internationalisation can be described as being a trade union form of "national protectionism"'. This political-economic interpretation of the development of the international trade union movement is important because it helps us to understand the restricted structure and aims of the Nigerian trade unions, formed entirely within the second period.[2]

## 5.3. Socio-political contexts of union activity

The third problem is that of the general socio-political context of working-class struggle. It is evident that the forms and nature of working-class struggle will (even at a given level of industrial development) be in large part determined by the type of socio-economic formation and its political forms.[3] Here we may return again to the terminology of labour-control strategies. Whilst recognising that these are not the only situations, we can nonetheless suggest that liberal strategies are typical of the core capitalist formation (with even such semiperipheral formations as Spain, Greece and Portugal being forced by popular mass protest to adopt these recently), state-collectivist ones being typical of what I will call the post-capitalist (i.e. Soviet type) formation, corporativist ones increasingly typical of the peripheral capitalist formation. Let us consider the implications of the

liberal and corporativist strategy for worker organisation and action. These are suggested by Hyman (1979a). Firstly,

> where unions and employers are obliged to initiate a bargaining relationship (since neither is able to ignore or eliminate the other), there may commence a mutually reinforcing cycle of declining union radicalism and employer (and governmental) hostility.

This is the pattern for a successful liberal-democratic polity. However,

> for a ruling class pursuing rapid capital accumulation within the constraints of an imperialist world economy the options are clearly limited...

In the absence of liberal-democratic practices,

> There is no reason to expect much latitude for trade unions to build up membership loyalty within the workplace...Without stable organisation at the point of production, workers' ability to struggle collectively - and the character of such struggles - will owe much to broader community solidarities and linkages. And union leaders who derive little support from governments or employers will be ill-placed to control and contain workers' actions...

Hyman is here evidently thinking of a 'pre-' rather than the 'post-liberal' situation that corporatism customarily implies. In the latter situation, there may well be stable organisation at the point of production - sustained by union leaders deriving much support from governments and employers. However, the conclusion remains valid: effective autonomous working-class action will (much more than in the liberal-democratic situation) require borader community solidarities and linkages.

## 5.4. Socio-economic contexts of union activity

In dealing, fourthly, with the socio-economic contexts of union activity, it will be necessary to take more space. By socio-economic context I mean those provided by different sectors within the capitalist mode of production. Richard Edwards (1979) has gone further than the earlier-mentioned works of Friedman and of Bromley and Gerry (Chapter 4 above), in demonstrating the inter-relation of control strategy, labour market situation, and the existence of working-class fractions with different needs, demands and organisational forms. Although Edwards considers all working-class groupings

as fractions, and although his work is both more complex and problematic than I can here show (see discussion in Reich 1980 and Nichols 1981), even the following schematic presentation will already suggest its value. On the basis of American evidence, Edwards identifies three significant sets of control strategies, market situations and fractions, each with roots in a specific phase of capitalist development, yet each still existing as a significant and distinct sector today. Although he does not restrict himself to a 1:1:1 fit, he does suggest the following common correlations:

| Control Strategy | Labour market | Fraction |
|---|---|---|
| Simple | Secondary | Working Poor |
| Technical | Subordinate primary | Traditional Proletariat |
| Bureaucratic | Independent primary | Middle Layers |

Simple control means the personal power of the owner, intervening directly in the labour process to exhort, bully and reward, combining incentives and sanctions in an unsystematic and arbitrary manner. It was born with the small, competitive firm at the beginning of industrial capitalism. It developed with the expansion of such companies, into a hierarchy of hired supervisors, substituting for the owner but lacking his direct authority, and coming into conflict with the workers - and the owners. The system still exists in the individually- or family-run firm. The secondary market is the preserve of casual labour, of low-skilled jobs in manufacturing, services, and seasonal agricultural work (c.f. Linhart 1978). It requires little or no training or skill, offers low pay and security, little or no advancement, and implies high labour turnover. The working poor consists of migrants, ethnic minorities, women, and (in the city) is concentrated in inner-city slums. It is largely un- or underemployed.

Technical control is brought about by assembly-line production that defines the exact task and controls the speed of the workers, thus reducing dramatically the control function of the foreman. It developed with the continuous-flow production of large-scale manufacturing, and in response to the rebellion provoked by the earlier system. Technical control within the firm was at first combined with secondary-market type casual labour outside it (as in Brazil and South Korea today). But it so concentrated and homogenised labour as to give rise, typically, to unions. Struggles of these have brought about the conditions of the primary labour market. This implies a certain security of employment, higher wages, well-defined occupations and established advancement paths. The

subordinate primary market today includes unionised production jobs in mass-production industry, sales, clerical and administrative work in the major service and retailing companies, and production-type activities in transportation, services and retailing. There are substantial returns to age and experience and to schooling. Dismissal is due less to indiscipline than to economic recession, and seniority provides some protection against dismissal. The traditional proletariat (hereditary proletariat? PW) is so named because of its working-class descent as well as its extensive continued occupation in traditional industries. Its relative wealth and security is, however, combined with routinised and machine-paced work.

Bureaucratic control means control through extensive rules concering job categories, grades, promotions, discipline, conditions, etc., and replaces negative sanctions by the positive one of advancement ladders. Like technical control, it grows out of the formal structure of the firm rather than the personal worker-employer relationship. It is intended to heterogenise labour and individualise protest. It was born in (or borrowed from the bureaucracy by? PW) high technology firms that wished to prevent unionisation of technical and clerical workers. It is spreading down and out to include production workers and well-unionised factories attempting to undermine existing union power. The independent primary market differs from the subordinate one in implying general skills allowing for career movements between firms, freedom from machine-pacing, and consequent reliance on independent initiative and self-pacing. The job groups covered are 1) middle-level technical and clerical staff and supervisors, 2) highly-skilled manual craft workers, 3) waged professionals such as scientists, engineers, doctors and lawyers. The state sector plays a major role within the market since it employs a large proportion of such professionals and technicians. The middle layers play the crucial articulating role between capitalists/managers and the mass of manual and administrative workers. Whilst they have more autonomy than this mass, they have no direct control over their own product or the labour process. They are meant to be organisation men, applying rules and criteria established higher up.

What are the implications of the three different situations for labour protest and organisation? Historically, simple control implied (particularly as firms became larger and hierarchies extended) strikes against the direct supervisor and then - in the face of bitter employer resistance - militant unionism. Oppressive conditions provoked wages and hours movements, which in turn undermined employer control. Today, simple control exists in the small peripheral firms that are the most difficult to unionise. The protest of the working poor

therefore tends to find expression outside the workplace, in health, housing, education and social security struggles. Technical control historically meant the technical interdependence of labour in massive factories, and thus implied a homogenisation of the workforce and company- or industry-wide collective action. Unions were eventually accepted. Today's traditional proletariat still presses for high and guaranteed wages, lifetime security and extensive pensions. The bureaucratic control that has come to replace this system in the central capitalist companies implies contradictions at workplace, firm and private-sector level. Rule by rules encourages 'work-to-rule' actions. The security and commitment of the workers increases their interest in the quality of working life and control over the work they will spend their lives doing. At the firm level, the high-wage/high-security bribe converts a variable into a quasi-fixed cost. And, at the private sector level, the replacement of the boss by the rule, tends to extinguish the private/public distinction, and to make the private sector increasingly a matter of public policy and political struggle. Given their comparative privilige and security, middle-layer workers show particular concern for such issues as taxation levels, peace, the environment, consumer rights and higher education.

Edwards understands the distinct and separate demands of his three fractions as representing their individual experiences of capitalism. He sees that such demands are occasionally a source of conflict between fractions, yet finds a general class interest in each of them. He argues that each makes demands on capital and state, not on the other fractions. Nonetheless, the

> absence of a working-class party has prevented the conjoining of all fractions' demands into a class agenda, and the divisions amongst workers have opened great possibilities for capitalists to play off one fraction against another (Edwards 1979:209).

## 5.5. Levels of worker struggle

The fifth problem is that of levels of working-class struggle. The classical and quasi-universal distinction is between 'economic' and 'political' struggle (Lenin 1970:68-142), the first associated with trade unionism, the second with revolutionary action. It is necessary to surpass this dichotomy and to explicitly distinguish between at least three or more levels. [4] I suggest that we need to distinguish between industrial, political and social struggle, with the latter two seen as including the former level(s). By industrial struggle is meant that which takes place within the workplace or enterprise, which is aimed against the direct employer (or his agent), and is concerned with better conditions

for the sale of labour power and/or control over the labour process. It is evident that such struggle is both the most primitive and the most basic type of labour struggle - the one most directly and immediately affecting the worker. By the same token, it is one that is or can be carried out by infinite separate strata, fractions or segments of the working class. By political struggle is meant that which takes place against a government or regime, which is concerned (additional to industrial demands) with pressing a defined labour interest on or through the state. The definition of the labour interest can be narrow (one pressure group amongst others) or broad (the major and fundamental social class). It evidently requires more complex and powerful organisations. Finally, although struggle at this level may take place by stratum, fraction or segment, it also provides a possibility for overriding some of the divisions implied by capitalist ownership patterns and the division of labour. By social struggle is meant that which is directed against capital and state, which is concerned (additional to industrial and political demands) with pressing the interests of the working class, understood as a hegemonic force (representing the interests of society as a whole). Evidently, this requires yet more complex and powerful organisations, capable of formulating an alternative social vision and of organising all oppressed classes and other groups for its realisation.[5]

## 5.6. Types of organisation

The sixth problem is that of the types of organisation necessary to raise struggle through the levels earlier mentioned. At the lowest level of consciousness and protest we will find at least the informal workgroup, delegation or strike committee. However, protest beyond the workplace customarily requires the trade union - a form of organisation that can evidently have an infinite variety of constituencies (e.g. enterprice, craft, industrial, general), of geographical coverage (e.g. sub-national, national, supra-national) and internal structures, not to speak of strategies, activities and leadership types. The extent and limits of trade union activities have been suggested in our initial quotations. Even if unions can 'lead workers to adopt political forms of action', they still unite them 'according to the tools of their trade or the nature of their product'. Like the most primitive type of collective worker protest organisation, they organise the working class along fraction, segment or stratum lines. Evidently, political struggle can be organised by trade unions, either where worker parties are illegal, or where the working class is still largely in the grip of bourgeois ideologies (e.g. the USA). In the one case, the union might play the role even of a workers' party (e.g. Poland), in the other it is likely to play that of a bourgeois pressure group. Typically, however,

legal or illegal parties will be formed claiming to represent the masses and/or seeking their support. Without wishing to disguise the differences between them, I would group here the labour party with the populist party. The first is based on recognition of a national worker interest, the second on one of the 'popular masses'. Common to them is precisely their failure to recognise the primacy of the labour-capital contradiction and their consequent inability to defeat capitalism (even when it is recognised as an enemy). Common to them also is their limitation to the nation state (populist parties) or to a particular grouping of them (labour parties). Despite all the experience and wealth of the latter, they have in practice been unable to establish themselves beyond the core capitalist social formation which provides the appropriate conditions for their existence. The transformation of what is still the limited political struggle of a nationally or regionally limited segment of the working or popular classes into the social struggle of one internationally-defined working class has so far seemed to require a socialist revolutionary party. In a series of crisis situations - though only in peripheral capitalist formations - communist parties have shown the capacity to link, incorporate and articulate the working-class and popular protest that has customarily been both expressed and confined within other types of organisations. This is how the communist party is seen by Petras (1978:56):

> It...incorporates the experience of class struggle in the cities, forms the cadres in the fields, mines and armies, and organises the diffusion of collectivist ideology and practice throughout the countryside, analysing the basic coordinates of the situation and intervening in the crucial political, economic and military structures to detonate revolutionary struggles...Without such a party, the objective situation of common oppression can be dissipated into a thousand secondary struggles involving communal, ethnic or sectoral interests. (My stress. PW).

We should add the capacity which these parties have - occasionally - shown to create effective international structures and generate international working-class action.[6]

## 5.7. Labour leadership strategies

Lastly, the question of leadership strategy. I would identify in the contemporary world the following: 1) the clientalist, or company unionist, in which the leader's sole point of reference is the interests of the company or its owner; 2) the corporativist (clien-

talism on a national scale) in which sole reference is to the capitalist state; 3) the business unionist, (the truly 'economistic' union leader) selling his members' labour power on liberal capitalist principles; 4) the reformist (moderate or radical), seeking equality through incremental change within the accepted political framework; 5) the radical-democratic, seeking equality through a fundamental change of the political framework; 6) the state-socialist, (clientalism within a post-capitalist state), in which workers' interests are identified with interests of the 'socialist state'; 7) socialist-revolutionary, seeking worker control of both production and state in order to abolish both market and bureaucracy.[7] Evidently, particular labour-control strategies will be concerned with producing or encouraging a particular type of leader. Indeed, each labour-control strategy has implicit within it a certain model of labour leader behaviour. The liberal-democratic strategy assumes reformist leaders, the state-collectivist one assumes state-socialist ones, the corporativist strategy assumes corporativist ones. But even in the most repressive situations, labour protest tends to call forth leadership of other types, subversive of the existing model. Conversely, a particular leadership ideology assumes (or seeks to bring about) a certain labour relations pattern. Reformist leaders implictly or explicitly assume the existence or possibility of a liberal-democratic polity within a successfully expanding capitalist society. State socialist and corporativist leaders assume backing by the repressive apparatus of the state. Socialist-revolutionary leaders assume that no labour control system can serve the working class, and work to bring workers themselves to this realisation.[8]

NOTES

1. There is surprisingly little general theoretical work on trade unionism by either the great Marxist scholar/activists, or by their successors. Richard Hyman (1971) produces a useful summary, criticism and attempted synthesis, from which much of my own argument is drawn. Hyman suggests that there were conflicting elements within Lenin's writings on trade unionism at different periods. He has been criticised for this by Ghotbi (1978:23-38), who stresses the necessity precisely to understand the historical specificity of the particular writings. The same point could be made about the conflicting elements Hyman identifies in the writings of Marx and Engels over time. In other words, neither Marx and Engels nor Lenin found it necessary to produce a general work on trade unionism. Despite the rich historical evidence accumulated since they died, and despite the possibility of examining trade union behaviour in the three major world social

formations, the task has not yet been attempted.

2. The Nigerian unions were not only formed in this period but also on this model. The model, moreover, was introduced to Nigeria by British unionists together with the British imperial state. The spontaneous protest of Nigerian wage labour, therefore, had little time to develop before being channelled into national union forms and an international labour movement deeply compromised with the nation state. Indeed, it is necessary to go further than Olle and Schoeller do and to specify the different political/ideological tendencies within the international trade union and labour movement at this time (for which see further in this chapter). It is also necessary to go further than them in spelling out the implications of 'national protectionism' when expressed internationally. I have elsewhere suggested that in looking critically at claims of 'internationalism' or 'solidarity' within the international labour movement, we need to distinguish between 'international relations' (on the inter-state or inter-bloc model), 'international trade union relations' (relations between national union leaderships which show some independence of capital and state), and 'international working-class solidarity' (relations between workers which directly challenge capital and state) (Waterman 1979j: Part 4).

3. The classical Marxist distinction was between conditions in Russia and those in Western Europe, a distinction developed by Gramsci, and currently the basis of much Marxist discussion on strategy for revolution under authoritarian and liberal-democratic regimes (see, for example, Anderson 1978). The significance for worker organisation and strike action is discussed by Ghotbi (1978: 27-29), who points out that

> The absence of 'political emancipation' makes the workers move quicker to the struggle against the ruling class compared with those who have 'political emancipation'. We know that it is easier to agitate the workers in a country where 'political emancipation' has not been achieved.

Whilst the 'East-West' distinction was recognised and discussed by the classical scholar/activists, the specific features of the 'South' were not. The only one to recognise the specific environment of labour struggle in any peripheral capitalist society apart from pre-revolutionary Russia was Trotsky, in two pregnant paragraphs in a paper

found unfinished on his desk after he was murdered by Stalin's agent in Mexico. (Trotsky 1972:7).

The uniquely difficult conditions for autonomous working-class organisation and action in post-capitalist societies began to be recognised even before the Polish workers' movement of 1980. The exact nature of the restrictions have been dealt with for Russia by Krawchenko (1977), for Hungarian factories by Haraszti (1977), and for Poland by Green (1977). Here we certainly cannot say that the absence of 'political emancipation' makes it easier to agitate the workers!

4. Even Ghotbi, whose identification with Lenin is complete, at least recognises the necessity to distinguish between 'economic', 'political' and the 'socialist political' struggle (1978:15). Post (1978:181-2) carries out a more conscious reformulation, distinguishing between the spontaneous 'economic struggle', 'trade union politics' (i.e. pressure-group politics), the 'politics of labour' (recognising a distinct national labour interest) and 'revolutionary struggle' (against capital and state). My feeling is that we probably need to reject the economic-political dichotomy, however 'dialectically' expressed. I find the very concept of 'economic' working-class struggle misleading. Contemporary Marxist writings on the capitalist labour process (Braverman 1974; Marglin 1974, Friedman 1977) all suggest the extent to which early, local and unorganised labour struggle is as much one for control over the process as for better terms of sale within it.

5. The political/social distinction is evidently not between reformist and insurrectionary strategies, but neither is it simply between political revolutions (anti-fascist, anti-imperialist) and 'socialist' ones. The problematic nature of the latter type is increasingly recognised amongst marxists. In the blunt words of one East European scholar:

> Development comes first, socialism only afterwards...Hence, the major transformations that have taken place since 1917 in Russia and subsequently Eastern Europe, can be described more accurately as a model of development strategy... than one of socialism. (Brucan 1979:73).

6. Although Petras recognises the deterioration of revolutionary parties once in power, he denies that this process was 'inherent' in the revolution. However, one is obliged to recognise that the communist type of revolutionary socialist

party has only been successful in agrarian societies, under authoritarian regimes, and in combined nationalist and anti-capitalist revolutions. I would suggest that the authoritarian and chauvinist nature of most communist parties once in power must be inherent both in the pre-existing social structure and in the type of socialist revolutionary party appropriate to that situation. This raises a further question of whether the classical model of the socialist revolutionary party is appropriate for industrialised capitalist countries - or others for that matter - in the present or future.

7. Evidently these types overlap at the edges. Just as evidently the typology is static. It may be less evident that this is not an evolutionary typology. The overlap is made explicit in the case of the clientalist, corporativist and state-socialist strategies but is implicit elsewhere. The typology is static in the sense that it does not indicate any direction of possible movement. This is unlike the typology of struggles, in which a rising level of struggles was suggested. The frequent use of typologies in this chapter requires some comment. It would seem to me that the development and use of these is justified providing 1) a consistent methodology underlies their construction, 2) an explicit norm informs them, 3) they aid labouring people to recognise forms of exploitation and oppression, and to overcome these. Other typologies, it seems to me, are likely to be formalistic, obfuscating and conservative (in the sense of preserving the existing political order). These reflections here have, like my conceptualisation of the socio-political contexts of union activity, been much stimulated by the efforts of Cox and Harrod (e.g. Cox 1971) to develop a non-marxist but universal typology of labour relations.

8. It is the problem of socialist revolutionaries in bringing this about that forms the core of Marxist discussion of trade unionism. Usually this has been to the exclusion of other aspects, which is why I have here placed little emphasis on it.

# Chapter 6
# PORTWORKER UNIONISM: THE SURPASSING OF GRADES AND TRADES

This chapter reveals the impasse of moderate reformism within the NPA unions, the increasing dissatisfaction of members of moderate unions, and the rise to predominance of a union that adopted a more radical stance. It begins with a short historical background and an overview of the large number of organisations within NPA in the 1970s. It then considers in turn the moderates, the splitters, the radicalised union, and their development during the decade.

Portworkers have been unionised since at least the 1940s, organisations within the old Marine Department and Nigerian Railways Corporation (NRC) truly providing the initial base of national industrial trade unionism in Nigeria (Hughes and Cohen 1978).[1] The portworkers were affiliated to the African Civil Servants Technical Workers Union (1941), the first federation of manual workers in Nigeria, which itself gave birth to the first Trades Union Congress (1943) and which helped organise the first General Strike of 1945. Port and rail unions dominated the united All Nigeria Trade Union Federation (1953 to 1957-9) that successfully fought several major national campaigns in the years leading up to independence. Although the portworkers were in the late 1950s and early 1960s divided in their national affiliation between competing moderate and radical centres, they nonetheless played an active role in the united national Joint Action Committee that organised the 1964 General Strike. Until it was dissolved, the NPA unions were affiliated to the moderate-reformist United Labour Congress (ULC), of which rail and port union leader H.P. Adebola himself was President (1962-69), and of which other port union leaders were prominent officers.

Despite their contribution to national-level unionism, the NPA unions have been seriously split since the 1940s. The process of division is best followed in Figure 6.1. This shows that there was originally but one union within the Marine Department, which came to be known as the Nigerian Maritime African Workers Union (NMAWU). By independence in 1960 there were around seven. The figure peaked at around eight

or nine in the mid-1960s. The divisions multiplied and unions resisted amalgamation despite the moderate-reformist ideology, national and international affiliation shared by all of them except for short periods or minor organisations.

Splits and splinter unions were based on occupational category, on department, on status. One union reported seven unconstitutional factions within 12 years. Personality conflicts amongst union leaders were rife. These were only added to when the two railway unions became railways-and-ports unions on the formation of the NPA in 1956. To the dominating personality of Chief O.A.F. Beyioku, leader of the NPA Workers' Union (NPAWU), there was now added the even more powerful personalities of M.A.O. Imoudu and H.P. Adebola. Imoudu, President of the Railways and Ports Workers Union of Nigeria (R&PWUN), was the first national working-class leader in Nigeria, universally known as 'Number One'. He was also a symbol of a radical and plebian nationalism. H.P. Adebola, General Secretary of the Railways and Ports Transport Staffs Union (R&PTSU), was the rising star of moderate, rightwing unionism. As Nigeria moved toward independence, and as international political and ideological rivalries impinged on Nigeria, Imoudu identified himself with socialism and revolution, Adebola with liberalism and reform.

To the factionalism of the workplace and of personality, there was therefore added that of ideology and politics. Although Imoudu identified himself with socialism and revolution, he had no organisational links with the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) or the international communist movement. And, although he was associated with various marxist groupings, the Nigerian Labour Party and a loose independent union federation called the Labour Unity Front (LUF), his socialism was of a declamatory variety, his militancy erratic. On the other hand, both Beyioku and Adebola were parliamentary politicians, and both became identified with the International Confereration of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and with the 'free-worldism' of the Cold War. They used anti-communism deliberately and effectively to undermine Imoudu within the NPA. They were helped by the inability of Imoudu to 1) translate his 'scientific socialism' into a meaningful strategy in the era of independence, 2) surpass a personalist leadership style, and 3) overcome divisions amongst portworker - or port and dockworker - unions.

Since such divisions continued into the period with which we are concerned, we will have to analyse them later. We will also have to consider the changing nature of the divisions and the manner in which they were simplified into a major conflict between the moderate majority within the Nigerian Maritime Trade

Union Federation (NMTUF) and the radical minority represented in the mid-1970s by the Railways and Ports Transport and Clerical Staffs Union (R&PT&CSU) of one-time moderate, H.P. Adebola.

We will be examining the development of some of the bodies listed in Table 6.1. Although there are gaps in the sources, the material is sufficient for us to gain an impression of the rise and fall of many of the unions, as well as of the relations between them. The table also reminds us of the constituencies of the unions, suggests their relative size, and lists the major portworker leaders. Although the issue of leadership-membership relations only arises in Part III, we cannot avoid here noting the very different membership bases of the organisations. Thus, in 1973, the R&PT&CSU of Adebola consisted largely of clerical workers in the Traffic/Operations Department, workers who were not only better educated but also considerably

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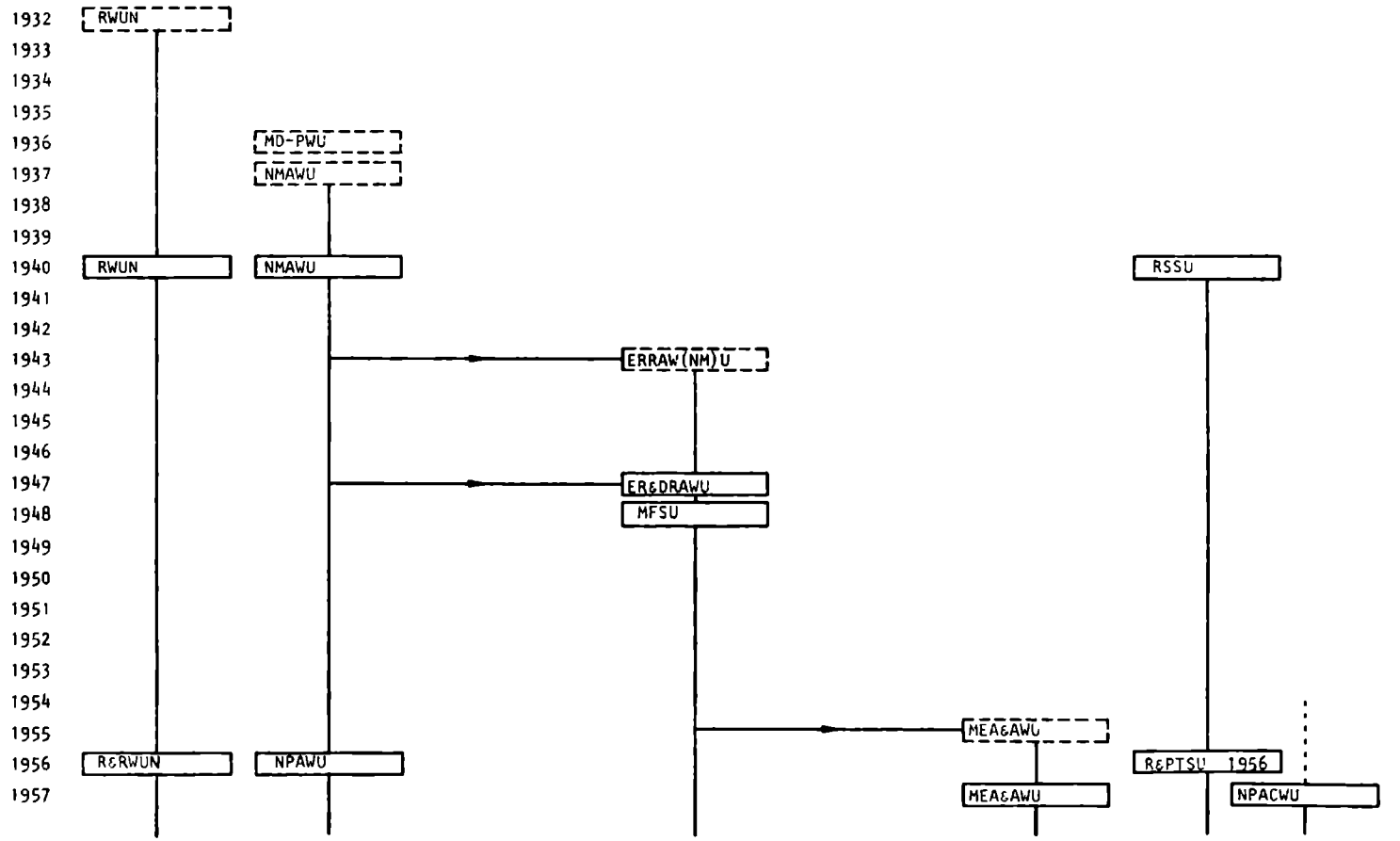
Figure 6.1. The origin of trade union organisations amongst NPA workers in Lagos in the 1970s

Key: ER&DRAWU: Engine Room and Deck Ratings African Workers Union; ERRAW(NM)U; Engine Room Ratings African Workers (Nigeria Marine) Union; FGT&GWU; Firemen Greasers Technical and General Workers Union; MD-PWU; Marine Daily-Paid Workers Union; MEA&AWU: Marine Engineering Assistants and Allied Workers Union; MESAN: Marine Engineering Staff Association of Nigeria; MFSU: Marine Floating Staff Union; NMAWU: Nigerian Marine African Workers Union; NMERRAWU: Nigerian Marine Engine Room Ratings African Workers Union; NMWU: Nigerian Maritime Workers Union; NPACWU: NPA Clerical Workers Union; NPAC&AWU: NPA Craftsmen and Allied Workers Union; NPAETTU: NPA Engineering Technicians Trade Union; NPAWU: NPA Workers Union; NPAJSSAN: NPA Junior Supervisory Staffs Association of Nigeria; R&P&DWUN: Railways and Ports and Dock Workers Union of Nigeria: R&PT&CSU: Railways and Ports Transport and Clerical Staffs Union; R&PTSU: Railways and Ports Transport Staffs Union; R&PWUN: Railways and Ports Workers Union of Nigeria; RSSU: Railway Station Staffs Union; RWUN: Railway Workers Union of Nigeria.

Notes: This table was drawn up in an attempt to discover the origins of the major portworker unions active in the 1970s. Given the frequent comings and goings, splits and mergers, it cannot, unfortunately, be considered complete and accurate even for the organisations it shows. It ignores a number of 'associations' (for the fire service, patrol staff and officers) recognised by NPA but not functioning as unions in the mid-1970s. It also ignores the common bodies created to represent them by the unions. These can be found in Table 6.1.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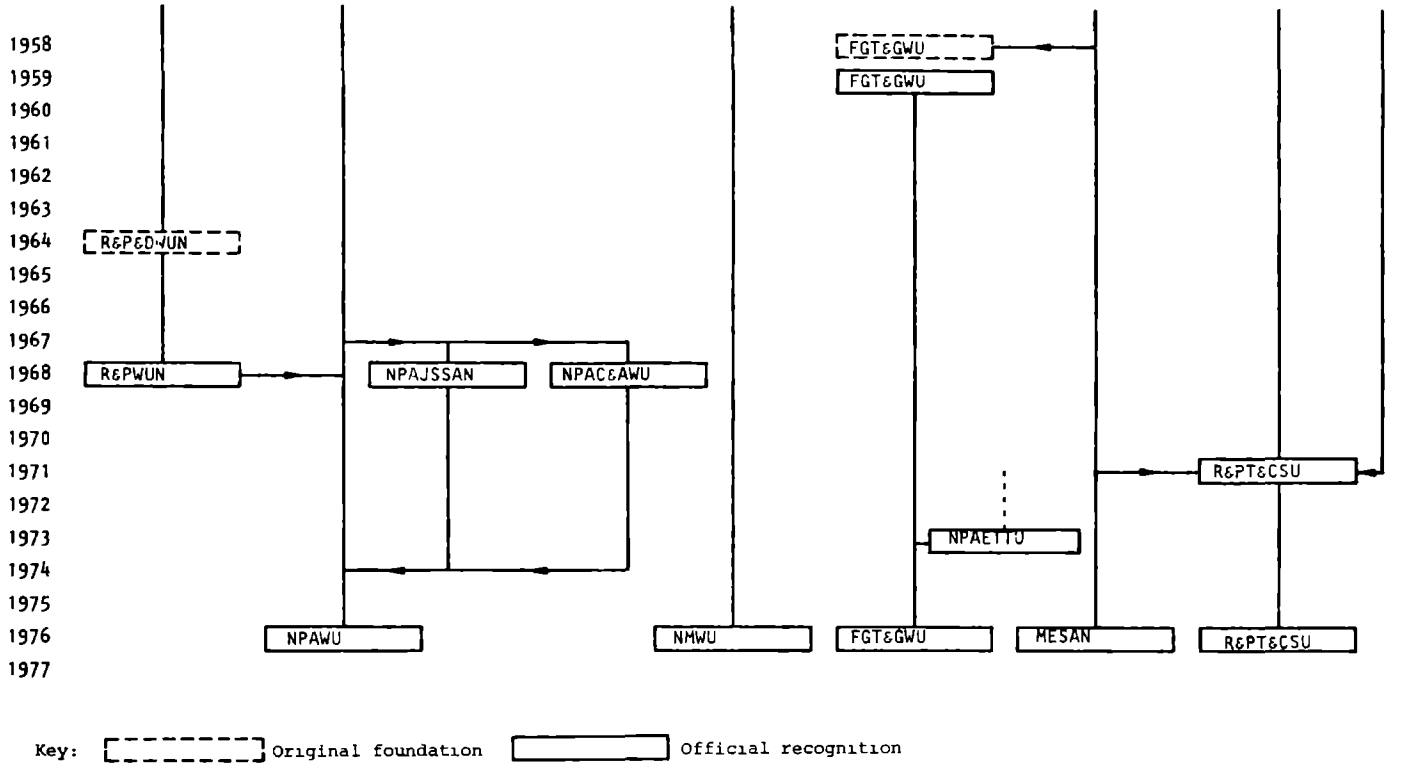
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R&PT&CSU
R&PT&CSU
Key:
Original foundation
Official recognition

Table 6.1 List of unions and associations within NPA nationally, 1973.

| Name and Officer | Membership | Remarks |
|---|---|---|
| Rail. & Ports Trans. & Clerical Staff U.<br>Sec. H.P.Adebola<br>Pres. J.O.Adegbesan | 4,523<br>Check-off | Mostly Traffic and General Manager's Departments. Quay staff, clerical and accounts. Also wharf plant drivers. |
| NPA Workers Union<br>Sec. C.A.Nwankwonta<br>Pres. A.Agbonikhena | 3,800<br>Check-off | Mostly Engineering and Stores Departments. Skilled and unskilled manual workers. |
| Nigerian Maritime Workers Union<br>Sec. O.Zudonu<br>Pres. S.E.Omerua | 1,790<br>Check-off | Harbours Department. 'Floating staff': Quartermasters, Masters, Able Seamen, unskilled workers |
| Marine Engineering Staff Association<br>Sec. J.O.Nwanze<br>Pres. A.Ademola | 190<br>Check-off | Dockyard Department. Skilled Engineers. Split from NMWU |
| NPA Firemen, Greasers, Tech. & General W.U.<br>Sec. S.S.Okezie<br>Pres. I.Dike | 180<br>Check-off | Mostly Dockyard Department. Semi- or unskilled 'floating staff'. Split from NPAWU |

Nigerian Maritime Trades Union Federation
Sec. J.E.B.Okoro; Pres. A.Agbonikhena

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| NPA Junior Supervisory Staff Association<br>Sec. R.P.Onochie<br>Pres. L.B.Sanusi | 67<br>Check-off | Mostly Engineering Department. Foremen. Split from NPAWU |
| NPA Fire Service Association<br>Sec. O.Shoyinka<br>Pres. S.Akinbayo | 223 | Not a registered trade union |
| NPA Craftsmen and Allied Workers Union<br>Sec. S.A.Osayande<br>Pres. S.A.Lisk | ? | Split from NPAWU |
| NPA Patrol Service Association<br>Sec. P.C.Okure<br>Pres. F.Odemola | 150 | Not a registered trade union |
| NPA Officers Association<br>Sec. O.B.Sarumi<br>Pres. O.Akindahunsi | 550<br>Check-off | All officers except top management |

Joint Cttee for Represent.
Sec. C.O.Alade
Pres. L.B.Sanusi
Consultant: O.A.F. Beyioku

Sources: NPA Trade Union List 1973; Interviews with NPA industrial relations officers and trade union leaders, 1975-77.

Note: The broken line suggests the uncertain relation of the R&PT&CSU to the NMTUF during the 1970s.

younger than the manual workers. The NPA Workers Union (NPAWU) of Nwankwonta and the Nigerian Maritime Workers Union (NMWU) of Zudonu both consisted largely of the somewhat older manual workers, skilled and unskilled, and divided from each other by department (as well as the ethnic identity of the 'floating staff'). The other minor organisations were either stratum or fraction based. Whilst in 1973 the R&PT&CSU had a problematic relationship with the NMTUF, some of the smaller splinters were outside it and seeking salvation through the Joint Committee for Representation (JCR) and its doughty consultant, Chief O.A.F. Beyioku.

Having made this initial specification, let us turn first to the traditional moderates of the NPAWU and NMWU, and the NMTUF they dominated.

## 6.1 The traditional moderates[2]

It should first be said that the formal industrial relations ideology of the NPA management was formally accepted by all the NPA unions. They also shared the management belief that it was possible for the Industrial Relations Department to play a role as intermediary between management and unions. They even believed they had the right to nominate candidates for the post of Assistant Industrial Relations Officer. During a December 1976 Seminar, NMWU Secretary Zudonu quoted approvingly the words of an Industrial Arbitration Tribunal (IAT) officer that recourse to it was a symptom of breakdown in industrial relations. Said Zudonu, 'There is no need to go to the IAT and I have never had to go to it'.

A more nuanced statement of general union attitudes can be found in an article by a leading NPA trade unionist, J.E. Bone Okoro (1974). Okoro begins with the declaration that there is a crisis in Nigerian industrial relations, so that

> The natural development of a sound industrial relations system is subsequently obstructed, and there is no peaceful co-existence in industry.

He criticises employers and management for being more concerned with finance, marketing, production and administration, than with developing 'effective industrial relations policies which command the confidence of employees'. He gives management the prime responsibility for good relations, and then recommends it to organise work effectively, to define responsibilities, and to give the employee a 'sense of achievement in his job'. He considers that unions also have a responsibility for good relations and ends with the declaration that

> Labour's view is that both sides in industry are equally responsible to each other in promoting the well-being of the industry by ensuring maximum productivity and economic efficiency.

The unions did not accept the formal ideology of management passively and unconditionally. In making a general statement of position on industrial relations, Okoro himself stressed the greater concern of labour for the equitable division of income, for security and rewards. Furthermore, the unions tended to criticise management for not putting the shared ideology into practice. But whilst the radicals were prepared to exploit the ideology to its limits, to use to the maximum every possibility provided by the institutions - and to go beyond them if necessary - the moderates seemed to have an unshakeable faith in the ideology of 'peaceful co-existence' with management.

If we examine the conference documents and other papers of the NPAWU in the 1970s, we get the impression of an organisation with little sense of direction, more engaged in internal politicking than in fighting the NPA.

Despite the fact that this organisation apparently gained the members of the Railways and Ports Workers Union of Nigeria (R&PWUN) in 1968, and that the splinters that left it around that time rejoined it in 1974, the NPAWU seems never to have regained its former prominence within the NPA. When Chief O.A.F. Beyioku resigned his position as General Secretary, his place was taken by C.A. Nwankwonta. Nwankwonta was a skilled millwright fitter at NPA who previous to his appointment had been a branch secretary of the NPAWU. Nwankwonta, an Ibo, was caught in the East by the Civil War from 1967-70, and the union had to make do with temporary secretaries during this period. Neither Nwankwonta nor his temporary substitutes had the qualities or stature of Beyioku. Nwankwonta's abilities were administrative ones. He had neither the mass appeal of some of his opposite numbers, nor the political skills that would have raised him to leadership in one of the national centres. Moreover, there was frequently open tension between him and his Executive Committee. Nonetheless, the elected union leaders evidently found his qualities suitable for the job.

Whilst there might have also been other reasons for divisions within the NPAWU, the major criticism seems to have been for its lack of effective leadership and of industrial militancy. At the 1973 council meeting in Port Harcourt, mention was made of a 'rift which was a threat to the Union's solidarity in Lagos'. This referred to the Mechanical Workshops. Apparently

some NPAWU members had previously left the union and joined in the Joint Committee for Representation (JCR), the consultant to which was the redoubtable Chief Beyioku. The branch leadership now wanted the NPAWU to take Beyioku as its consultant. When this was refused by the union leadership, the branch insisted that Beyioku remain as its consultant. The reason for the friction was that the branch 'charged the union for lacking sufficient bargaining power'. This was in respect of the 'one-eighth award' (of which more will be said later) that Alhaji Adebola of the R&PT&CSU had managed to win for his members. Eventually the leadership expelled three officers (R.L. Okoya, a former NPAWU President, H.O. Enwereonye, Branch Chairman and Okeke Ugwuanyi, the Branch Secretary). As a result of this, 487 members quit the union in protest.

In the first part of 1974 it appeared as if the NPAWU was on the up-turn. The unions grouped within the JCR had decided to rejoin the organisation. This, according to Nwankwonta, ended '10 years of industrial strife' within the union. It is, however, to be noted that the agreement between the NPAWU and the returning bodies stipulated that Beyioku become consultant to the union. This seems to have been a popular notion amongst the union branches also. Resolutions from two ports to the 1974 conference mentioned Beyioku, one asking that he be included in a tour of all branches, the other moving not only that he become the consultant but that the conference itself should immediately settle on his fee. Although it was by now evident that Adebola's union was undermining the NPAWU by its militant tactics, Nwankwonta still felt it necessary to conclude his report to the 1974 conference by stating his

> belief that the modern trade unionist should share the fundamental philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. He should be a man of peace, man of freedom and a man who abhors violence...

In 1976, disaffection boiled over again amongst members in the Mechanical Workshops. In early 1976, Ugwuanyi (then Acting General Secretary in the absence of Nwankwonta) wrote to the other port unions talking of the need for a merger. He referred to the recent formation nationally of the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) and to a merger process said to be taking place on the railways, and stated that given 'the move to restructure the present trade unions on industrial basis, we need not wait to be told of what to do from outside' (NPAWU to NMTUF, January 17, 1976). Possibly due to the failure of this initiative, Ugwuanyi (now speaking as Lagos District Secretary of the NPAWU) criticised the leadership for its 'sluggish approach', complained that 'the dynamism of the past...is no more there', and suggested immediate negotiations for a

merger with the R&PT&CSU (NPAWU Lagos District Secretary Statement March 3, 1976). One month later, the Mechanical Workshops Branch declared that its members had resigned 'en masse' from the NPAWU in order to join the R&PT&CSU (NPAWU Mechanical Workshops Branch to NPAWU, April 14, 1976). From now on the NPAWU was fighting a rearguard action against the increasing encroachment of the R&PT&CSU.

The NMWU was the second largest of the traditional NPA unions, firmly based in the Harbours Department, and long-led by a veteran of national trade unionism, O. Zudonu. Yet, despite its adoption of its new broad title in 1971, and despite the often critical and farsighted pronouncements of its General Secretary, the Nigerian Maritime Workers Union was only able to put up a defensive battle against the depredations of the R&PT&CSU.

The pronouncements and analysis of its General Secretary make the NMWU appear much more radical than the NPAWU, and even than the militant R&PT&CSU. A one-page long statement on 'Nigerianisation' at the 1973 conference was a diatribe against the rich in Nigeria. Despite the fact that, according to Zudonu, 85% of senior service in the public and private sector rose from the junior service 'they have been very callous and indifferent' to the workers, who have been regarded as 'second class citizens'. Coupled with this view was a critique of a demands strategy based on the fight for promotions. And this in turn led Zudonu to a criticism of the labour movement. He accused the unions of shortsightedly focusing on such incentives as promotion and overtime, instead of increasing worker purchasing power, improving housing, transport, education and leisure facilities. Zudonu argued for a 'legally enforceable National Minimum Wage' (Zudonu 1974), and his union demanded of the Udoji Commission a reduction in the existing number of wage grades. The required change in the movement was not seen as simply affecting its outdated demands but also its 'conservative and outdated' structure. The solution was for the Trade Unions to amalgamate into larger, stronger and financially self-supporting Trade Unions 'that can evolve completely new objectives, structures and policies...' (Zudonu Statement, September 18, 1974).

One must not exaggerate this radicalism. As his frequent references to 'national objectives' might suggest, the necessary changes were seen as compatible with the intentions of government. Moreover, when Zudonu was talking on wage policy, his references were to British textbooks, and his norm appeared to be that of Great Britain (Zudonu 1974).

Of more import, however, is what happened when this egalitarian and democratic ideology was translated

into a programme and the programme into action. The programme was - at the very least - ambiguous. Thus, of some 70 detailed demands made by the 1973 conference (NMWU to NPA, May 12, 1973), at least 50 were typical 'grades and trades' demands (the term used in the NPA for narrow group demands) that were in the interests not even of floating staff in general, nor the union's membership as a whole, but of smaller groups, or even of individuals. No doubt the 50 points covered (and were meant to cover) the direct self-interest of all influential individuals and groups in the union, but they did not begin to make the kind of general demands which Zudonu himself considered necessary for Nigerian workers as a whole. Indeed, the only undeniably general demand was one for the conversion of daily-paid workers to permanent establishment after three years.

Despite Zudonu's criticism of the fight for promotions, we find him boasting at the 1973 conference that 'Promotions for our members...was the highest in the history of our Union', and at the 1976 conference that one of the 'longest and most decisive struggles...since 1952' was the training of nine men subsequently promoted as pilots! Amongst those promoted to senior staff in this period was the union's longstanding President, S.E. Omerua. But here the union's egalitarian ideology seemed to reassert itself: unlike the R&PT&CSU, a senior staff position was seen as disqualifying a member for this post.

A further contradiction between NMWU theory and practice is found in the area of industrial relations. The general attachment of Zudonu to the principles of liberal industrial relations theory has been mentioned. This general attachment led him to a specific objection to the notion of national wage-setting by commission. According to the union,

> the workers have lost faith in Public Service Commission as a means of determining the wages and conditions of service in the Public Service. This is because it deprives the workers and their organisations of their democratic right to collective bargaining as contained in ILO Convention 98, Article 4, which is the best means of determining wages and conditions of service and which has been ratified by the Federal Government. (NMWU Conference Documents 1976).

One is here again aware of the contrast between the R&PT&CSU, which we will see pragmatically adjusting to and imposing itself within a Nigerian reality, and the NMWU attempting to act according to some British ideal.

Now for the Nigerian Maritime Trades Union Federation, the organisation that aspired to represent all

maritime unions, not only those within the NPA. The gap in source materials on the NMTUF in the period 1965 to the early 1970s is explained by its virtual stagnation at that time. Its last conference in the 1960s was held in 1964, but the newly-elected officers found that their predecessors had made away with its properties. Then came the Civil War and its conference was postponed even longer.

It required action by NPA management to bring about the 1972 conference, a fact acknowledged at the event by the NMTUF itself. This conference seems to have marked the revival of the NMTUF, a revival possibly stimulated by the success of the R&PT&CSU over the one-eighth award. The retiring President felt called upon to 'congratulate once more the R&PT&CSU for this singular achievement' which formed the basis for the NMTUF's later gains on behalf of the rest of the NPA workers (NMTUF Conference Documents 1972).

The warm relations of the NMTUF with management were revealed at this conference and on other occasions during succeeding years. In addition to its services in solving a dispute with Adebola, management had also made money available to the federation which enabled the conference to be held. Indeed, when the NMTUF approved the new negotiation and consultative machinery in 1974, it appeared that its relations with NPA management in Lagos were better than with its own local officers in Port Harcourt. A seven-man delegation of the NMTUF together with NPA industrial relations officers was touring the provinces to inaugurate the new machinery when it ran into the bitter opposition of the Port Harcourt branch of the NMTUF. The local officers claimed that they had not been consulted about the document, which was entirely new to them. President Agbonikhena conceded that they had not been consulted but said there was room for amendment and persuaded the NMTUF officers to attend the opening ceremony. When they did so it was only to stage a protest walkout. Agbonikhena felt it necessary to condemn this behaviour to the Port Manager as 'unwarrented and most unguided' and to add that it 'did not conform with the practice of modern Trade Unionism'. The Manager in his turn commended the 'mature sense of responsibility' of the Lagos delegates, stated that the document was not subject to discussion and assured them that it would be strictly adhered to. The launching ceremony then took place in the absence of the local NMTUF officers but 'with smiles from both sides' (NMTUF Memorandum, November 1974). Whether this tour was paid for by NPA management is not stated. It seems likely that all such tours were because the following year the NMTUF was claiming N20 transport costs for federation officers returning from a tour 'on management's assignment' to the Delta, seeking industrial peace (NMTUF to NPA, July 2, 1975).

'Modern trade unionism' did not seem an adequate defence for the NMTUF, which was now under attack from the outside by the militant R&PT&CSU. In December 1976 it felt obliged to appoint Michael Imoudu - himself the radical scourge of the NMTUF unions in the 1950s and early 1960s - as its Patron. This is a position giving prestige but no power, commonly used to dispose of difficult veteran union leaders in Nigeria.

The occasion on which Imoudu was introduced to NMTUF supporters in the NPA canteen on Apapa Quay could be considered either as tragedy or farce.[3] A somewhat surreal situation, with Imoudu being praised by his moderate former critics for his past militancy, was only compounded when the aged, exhausted and confused Imoudu himself spoke:

> My aim is to know your problems and raise them one by one with management in a peaceful way...I am 76 years old but still strong [cries of 'Imo, Imo']...I went to China. In China, the Soviet Union and Britain you have one united trade union...Who followed Murtala Mohammed, the murdered leader of this country? We must carry out his assignment...In Nigeria despite riches we are suffering. 10 million a day from oil and you never enjoy it...You are the people to organise the peasants so that when the military hands over power - to me! [mixed laughter and shouts of 'Number One']...Who is going to rule Nigeria? Army, navy, airforce, peasants, workers! We are all united!

It cannot be said that Imoudu's speech held the audience riveted. They were amused and enthusiastic but continued eating and talking, so that only those at the table could have fully heard Imoudu's rather frail voice.[4]

The conflict with the R&PT&CSU was taking place as government was announcing its intent to legislate for the creation of industrial unions. This was a step against which neither side in the dispute had any objection, although each was evidently anxious about who should control such a body. The new NPAWU (which will be called the NPAWU2 to distinguish it from the old one) eventually consisted of a cross-section of union leaderships, and therefore of departments and skill levels, as well as of the ethnic groups of southern Nigeria. The successor to the NMTUF was under the firm leadership of H.P. Adebola. Although the new body was the creation of the Trade Union Administrator, and although its officers were initially appointed in closed-door negotiations, there can be no doubt that Adebola won this position by his popularity amongst the NPA workers.

## 6.2 The splitters

Before turning to Adebola and his union, however, we must consider the significance of the Joint Committee for Representation.[5] The creation of the JCR was the first clear organisational indication of the growing dissatisfaction of NPA workers with their traditional unions. Its particular structure and short life are of equal significance. What distinguishes the organisations within the JCR is that (with one possible exception) they all consisted of NPA workers who had split off from other unions, particularly the NPAWU. To those JCR members listed in Table 6.1 we need only add the Mechanical Workshops Branch of the NPAWU that associated itself with the JCR in 1972-73. What distinguishes the JCR itself is that it was led by Chief Beyioku, a man to whom the individual groups had turned for leadership even before the JCR was created in 1972.

The benefits that the JCR unions obtained from their special form of organisation were mixed. Beyioku had personal relationships with Minister of Labour Enahoro, and with other national figures. His files (Waterman 1979b) contain letters to 'Dear Tony' (Enahoro) and to or from other past or present acquaintances. Conferences of his unions received messages not only from NPA management but also from such men. Attention was drawn to Beyioku's contacts at the conferences themselves. Beyioku was successful in getting the NPA to withdraw or significantly modify its demands for paper qualifications. But in another case his experience and contacts were apparently of no avail. This was a dispute that began in 1969 between the NPA Junior Supervisory Staffs Association of Nigeria (NPAJSSAN) and the NPA. When it could not be settled, the matter was taken by Beyioku to the newly-created Industrial Arbitration Tribunal. The IAT apparently reported to the Ministry in 1970. But, despite the personal appeals of Beyioku to Enahoro, it was impossible to get the Ministry to release the result. Despite further personal letters, the issue dragged on through 1971, the Ministry writing that the report was delayed because of legal technicalities. In 1972 the union appealed to the Head of State on the issue. Letters from the union (always devoid of any specific threat of industrial action) and from the Ministry (continually avoiding a decision) flowed backwards and forwards until the union was finally informed that its claim had been turned down flat.

Given the demand of the JCR that Beyioku become the NPAWU consultant on merging with that union in 1974, it would be evidently wrong to assume that it was disappointment with him that caused the dissident workers to rejoin. It seems more likely that it was due to the experience that, despite his qualities, small groups could not achieve their demands on their

own. The major advance in the positions of workers led by Beyioku would have come, after all, not from his activities in pressing their special interests, but from the Adebo award of 1970-71 and the Udoji award of 1975. When dissatisfaction amongst these workers broke out again within the NPAWU, they turned not back toward separate organisation under a consultant, but toward affiliation with what they considered to be a more dynamic and successful union, the R&PT&CSU.

## 6.3 The new radicals

The transformation of the R&PTSU into the R&PT&CSU[6] seems to have been the beginning of its expansion within NPA. It came about on merging with the NPA Clerical Workers Union in 1968 (NPA News, March 1968: 12)[7]. But even in 1971, it still had only 3,001 members nationally in the railways and ports combined (Registrar of Unions Returns 1971). However, between 1971 and 1972, over 564 workers in the Traffic Department are said to have signed check-off forms in favour of the union (R&PT&CSU Conference Documents 1973). Most of these were former members of the NMWU. And it seems to have been mostly by this process of growth that the R&PT&CSU reached a membership of 4,523 members in the NPA nationally by 1973 (Table 6.1) and nearly 4,000 within the NPA in Lagos alone by 1977 (Table 10.1).

The growth of membership does not imply that the union was without its internal weaknesses or conflicts. Adebola was at pains to point out at the 1973 conference that large numbers of union 'members' (by which he meant all workers within departments his union claimed to represent) were not 'financial' (meaning they had not signed check-off forms). More positively, the General Secretary proposed at the same conference the necessity to increase the numbers signing check-off forms, and to base elections only on financial members. Moreover, the union should become involved in a building project, increase its fulltime staff, pay essential benefits, form a cooperative society and insurance company, take out company shares for 'commercial participation for progress and stability', and create a whole series of specialised committees on education, propaganda, social questions, etc. There is little evidence that the union carried out these ambitious plans. An explanation for the attraction exercised by the union over NPA workers outside its ranks can hardly be found here.

The type of demands being made by Adebola on behalf of his members appear not to have been very different from those of other union leaders. Thus, in a supplementary submission to the Beckley Tribunal (Beckley Exhibits 1967: No. 426), we find the union complaining about corruption and supercession in pro-

motions, the violation of agreements, wastage by management, NPA officers acting on behalf of transport contractors, and making demands for a 39-hour week and night-duty allowance for quay staff (this last issue developed into what later became known as the one-eighth demand and will be dealt with in Chapter 14). With the exception of the one-eighth demand, these tended to be typical grades and trades issues. And whilst the one-eighth issue turned out to be generalisable to many, if not all, portworkers, it was initially put forward on behalf of the union's own members on the rails and in the ports. Even given the impact of the one-eighth award on non-R&PT&CSU members, it seems unlikely that it was the nature of the union's demands that won them over.

We have seen that in general the NPA unions accept liberal industrial relations ideology, accept the NPA management version of this and are oriented towards the reformist trade unionism of the industrialised capitalist democracies. Did the R&PT&CSU distinguish itself from them in this sphere? A useful place to examine this question might be the one issue of a R&PT&CSU publication that we have (Spark, August 1972). This suggests that the union shared the same ideology as its competitors. It identified with the United Labour Congress (ULC) belief that 'employers have the right to exist and are not necessarily exploiters'. It attacked the 'dirty treatment' handed out to the multinational companies when their operations were taken over by Iraq and Libya, claiming this would alienate 'foreign investors and entrepreneurs or business partners' and suggesting they be taken to the International Court in The Hague. It characterised Nigeria as having 'a democratic form of government' and Nigerians as enjoying 'the highest standard of living in black Africa'.[8] It attacked the non-aligned Labour Unity Front as a 'handful of self-opinionated Half-Politicians Half-Trade Unionists', and the 'socialist-inclined organisations' for

> claiming that the Pro-West trade unions are being controlled by the United States of America and that their activities are continually under the close study of the CIA.

It identified, finally, with the ULC, which

> has no systematic ideology other than the Broad Generality called free Trade Unionism. At the Heart of the idea of free Trade Unionism are genuine freedom of Association, Collective Bargaining Agreements freely arrived at with employers and freedom from political domination.
>
> Whilst conferences did not necessarily describe

Nigeria under military rule as 'democratic', they did identify unconditionally with successive regimes. Speaking of the Gowon regime in 1973, the General Secretary's report stated that after the Civil War

> The leaders of the country, with courage and faith in God, rose up to expectation. The programme of rehabilitation went on smoothly and today everybody knows that the programme of reconstruction and National Development have reached a peak that gives credit to our great country, Nigeria. (R&PT&CSU Conference Documents 1973).

Two years later the totally discredited Gowon regime collapsed in a bloodless coup. And at the next union conference, the General Secretary was now saying of it that 'corruption was becoming widespread and honest people were pushed into the background'. He spoke of Gowon's replacement, Murtala Mohammed, as 'this beloved darling of Nigerians' and declared that he had achieved in 201 days 'what the Gowon regime was unable to do in five years' (R&PT&CSU Conference Documents 1976).

In his subservience to the regime in power Adebola may have even surpassed the other NPA unions. But in his attitude to Western governments he began to differ from them. Although Adebola might have earlier been bitterly anti-communist and pro-Western, he had begun to criticise United States influence in the ULC even whilst President of that organisation. More recently it has been possible to find him (in a personal capacity) himself denouncing to the Adebiyi Tribunal the CIA connections of US unionists working in Nigeria (Adebola Memorandum, March 22, 1976). None of this, however, implies that the ideology of the R&PT&CSU was significantly different from that of the other NPA unions. Even if one were to believe that portworker unionists were open to ideological appeals, it would appear that there would be no basis on which workers could make such a distinction.

The only area in which the R&PT&CSU appears to have differed sharply from the other portworker unions is in that of strategy - meaning by this the manner in which it sought to achieve its ends.

It may be worthwhile beginning with the attitude that the union had toward management. This may not have been part of the clearly-articulated political ideology we have identified in Spark, but it was something that clearly distinguished it from the other NPA unions and that did inform its activities. On the one hand, the union declared its identification with the tasks of management. Thus, when NPA declared itself in serious financial straits in the early 1970s, the

R&PT&CSU decided that the theme of its conference should be 'Need for Increase in Revenue for Security of Service and Continuity of Unionism' (R&PT&CSU Conference Documents 1973). It also issued at one time the 'Ten Commandments of a Devoted Worker'. Finally, Adebola was quite capable of upbraiding NPA workers for laziness and asserting that wage demands were only justified by higher productivity (Daily Times, July 16, 1971). Whether these declarations had any implications for action by either the union or its members is doubtful. The other element clearly had. This was the belief of the union in its independence of and equality with management. According to one of its officers,

> The union took NPA management as equal partners in the progress of the Authority and presented its demands on the basis of equality. The union looked on workers as free agents who were in the position to give or withhold their cooperation. (Ugwuanyi 1978).

The belief of Adebola and his officers in their equality with management found expression in the public criticism which they showered on NPA with increasing pace during the 1970s.

In an apparent attempt to restore a past golden age of equality between management and union (or a future golden age, when there would be a management that workers could follow and trust) the R&PT&CSU accused either individual managers (up to and including the General Manager), or certain levels and branches of management, or the NPA in general, of incompetence, corruption, tribalism and other shortcomings. Whether there was such a past of mutual respect (perhaps during a period in which Nigerian senior staff and union officers had similar backgrounds and felt themselves in equal opposition to a colonial management) is uncertain. The fact is that Adebola acted as if the Beckley Tribunal had never come to an end and as if it was his responsibility to continue its work.

In 1975 we see Adebola claiming to the Statutory Corporations Service Commission that on a number of occasions officers had accepted bribes in order to obtain promotion or regrading. Similar accusations were made in 1976 to the Public Services Review Unit (PSRU).

In the same year, during the course of a bitter industrial relations dispute, a direct attack was launched on the top management and on the General Manager himself, this time in very strong language indeed. Passages from the relevant letter (R&PT&CSU to NPA, August 25, 1976) - which was widely circulated later - follow:

> We are watching how far your officers will push you and how you will wield your alleged almighty influence...We have confronted you personally with making improper use of the names of the Chief of Staff...and the Federal Commissioner for Transport...One of your officers once told us that they were all afraid of you because...you have very strong connections...We, on our side, believe that if a person has an acquired power and he does not use it in a judicious manner, God the Giver of Life and Ruler of Destinies, will surely take it away from him.

The campaign escalated with a long letter, including six appendices, rehearsing the union's criticisms of management. In answer to accusations of irresponsibility against his union, Adebola declared that

> Nobody in the Nigerian Ports Authority...can claim to have greater interest in the affairs of this country as well as those of the Nigerian Ports Authority than our own. Nearness to the hierarchy is not an indication of unalloyed loyalty...and the General Manager or any of his officers cannot claim to have reached the level of our commitment to the progress, stability and prosperity of this nation.

If the above illustrates the fearlessness of the union toward a management it appeared to consider not so much its equal as its moral inferior, what we report below will well illustrate its aggressive style of bargaining. Whilst Zudonu proudly declared that he had never 'had to' go to the Industrial Arbitration Tribunal, we see Adebola repeatedly boasting of the frequency with which he has gone to the IAT since its creation in 1969. By 1973 it was already three times, by 1976 eight. Where the existing labour relations institutions seemed inadequate, he went to litigation.

As an example of successful use of what was by now the Industrial Arbitration Panel (IAP), we may take the dispute the union brought before it late 1976. This concerned a number of issues: 1) NPA termination of a senior clerk, Bamidele Akinwamide, who was also an activist in the union; 2) salary gradings said to have been influenced by bribery; 3) implications of the five-day week for those the union represented; 4) failure to promote to appropriate positions those in possession of certain marine engineering certificates; 5) failure to pay to staff a fair amount of the overtime charges paid by shippers; 6) double overtime for weekends and public holidays; 7) arrears following from the one-eighth award. Argument concerning the issues themselves began on December 6, 1976.[9] What

was striking at this sitting was NPA management's unwillingness to give their real reason for the sacking of Akinwamide. It was evident, both from the union's evidence and from interviews with unionists and management officers, that Akinwamide was suspected of leaking to the union the contents of an NPA letter. This was said to have denounced Adebola to the Supreme Military Council and called for the union's banning. Since the R&PT&CSU had members in key clerical positions, and since the union was always remarkably well informed about confidential goings-on at NPA headquarters, such suspicions are not surprising. Management, however, was evidently unwilling or unable to provide proof that Akinwamide had leaked this document.

In June 1977 the Ministry of Labour issued the decisions of the IAP. The union won the issue on Akinwamide, on the marine engineers and on the one-eighth arrears. On the other issues the union was directed to resubmit to NPA, and NPA to forward this document with its comments within 30 days to the PSRU. The conflict was by no means over, but the union could feel well pleased with its work.

Litigation has been resorted to both before the existence of the IAT and since. In 1955 the union's solicitors were threatening action for breach of contract over a collective agreement (Beckley Tribunal 1967: Exhibit 426). In 1973 the union was threatening legal proceedings over NPA refusal to transfer the check-off payments of the transferred NMWU members to itself. Management settled out of court at a cost of some N1,848.

Although the actual industrial actions of the R&PT&CSU will be dealt with in Chapter 14, it is necessary here to deal at least with its attitude toward strikes and stoppages. One would have expected the aggressive bargaining strategy of the union to express itself in a favourable attitude toward strikes. Its attitude was, however, more nuanced - not to say contradictory. In its 1976 Conference Report we find Adebola declaring that

> In the transitional stages of the change that is taking place in our economic life today, we as trade unions will be called upon to exercise much patience and to make real sacrifice, even where our legitimate claims are in question, in the interest of our nation. It is because of this that our Union decided to declare a strike-free period.

He was referring to a six-month strike truce declared in the previous year (Daily Times, April 11, 1975) as the union's contribution to the anti-congestion exercise. Although the union seems to have kept to its

promise, the conference report did not draw any lessons from its experience. And, when Adebola next spoke on the topic, it was to insist on the right to strike. The occasion was his submission to the Adebiyi Commission (Adebola Memorandum, March 27, 1976). Here he declared that the union had both 'respected the two Decrees' outlawing strikes in Nigeria and 'gone on strike on [a] few occasions'. The explanation for this self-contradictory behaviour lies in Adebola's assertion that the decrees permitted managements to feel that 'unions have been rendered impotent' and that government never did anything to managements that ignored justified complaints. Adebola declared that the decrees were justified during the Civil War (when his union indeed appears to have rarely struck) but that the strike ban should be ended. Furthermore,

> No cumbersome decision-making process should be imposed on any trade union. Some Managements are very good and can understand the feelings of the workers. But there are others that are wicked and are very fond of victimising workers. A strong union will not like to wait for a Management to disorganise the plan of the Union to strike. It will like to take the Management by surprise in order to teach the Management a lesson.

It thus appears that whilst the union was prepared to voluntarily shelve strike action for the 'national good', it would not accept obligatory bans. And whilst it was prepared to make such concessions for the nation, it believed in their necessity in order to deal with recalcitrant managements. Although there is no evidence that Adebola himself was a strike-broker by nature, it is clear that he considered the strike weapon essential in the union struggle to be treated as an equal by management. Since the NPA management was a 'wicked' one, his organisation was prepared to openly flout successive anti-strike laws and take such industrial action as it considered necessary to bring it to heel. There can be little doubt that this attitude found an echo amongst the frustrated NPA workers.

## 6.4. Summary

First of all let us consider the constituencies, or membership bases, of the various unions. We noted in the introduction to this chapter the extent of division that occurred in the 20 proceeding years, such organisational splits being based on a broad variety of imaginable worker self-identifications. Such divisions not only continued into the 1970s but seemed even to multiply with the creation of the JCR. The JCR represented almost the most extreme form of factionalism, with tiny groups seeking their self-interest not through their own efforts, but through the services of

a professional intermediary. Yet such splintering was evidently expressive of a dissatisfaction with the effectivity of the traditional NPA union leaderships. And it is certainly not without significance that shortly after rejoining the NPAWU, the troublesome Mechanical Workshops Branch transferred itself to the R&PT&CSU. Although this latter organisation might have been traditionally marked by the kind of limited constituency characteristic of the other NPA unions, it was able to act as a vessel for the discontent within the NPA, thus beginning to make itself into the kind of NPA-wide union that the NMTUF had failed to provide. The NMTUF seems to have never been more than the sum of its parts, its low level of activity in the 1970s reflecting the impasse of the majority of unions within the NPA.

The question of why the R&PT&CSU was able to transform itself into such a challenge to the others requires a consideration of the nature and form of union demands. We have seen the prevalence within NPA unions of grades and trades demands, and of demands for individual promotion into senior staff - even where the self-defeating nature of these was clearly recognised. We have noted that the demands of the R&PT&CSU were little different, and that even the one-eighth demand originated as a grades and trades one. We have suggested that the major difference from the other unions was not so much its policy as its strategy - the manner in which it sought to achieve its ends. This involved 1) aggressive verbal attacks on managerial attitudes and behaviour, 2) an aggressive bargaining strategy, exploiting existing institutions to the maximum, breaking laws where considered necessary, and rejecting in practice the ideology of liberal-paternalist industrial relations, 3) disregard for the traditional inter-union relations that had preserved the old constituencies and prevented the creation of an NPA-wide organisation.

So seriously did the Nwankwontas and Zudonus take the ideology of liberal-paternalist industrial relations that they rejected even the liberal-paternalist institutions (the IAT/IAP), and failed to copy the behaviour of their trade union mentors in Europe and the US. Formally dependent on the same ideological sources, Adebola nonetheless developed an independent and aggressive strategy. The limits of Adebola's militancy are suggested in his consistent subordinacy to the Nigerian state - whoever happened to be in charge of it. Adebola legitimised his aggressive behaviour toward both foreign trade unions and NPA management precisely by reference to a presumed common interest of workers and state in Nigeria. We are left with Beyioku, the ex-trade union leader, ex-politician, and professional broker. Accepting the ideology of industrial relations, he tried to operate partly on this basis and partly on the basis of personal contacts

with the leadership of state. Whatever the possibilities for such brokerage relations between a dock contractor and his workers (which we will be able to consider in a moment), this was evidently impossible between NPA workers and NPA management, or NPA workers and the Nigerian state. It was partly a matter of the unwillingness of NPA and state to grant more than crumbs in answer to his appeals, and partly the dissatisfaction of the NPA workers with such crumbs as were granted. But this kind of leadership seemed to have little future amongst portworkers.

Bearing in mind these major characteristics of NPA union organisational development in the 1970s, we must now consider those of the dockworker unions.

NOTES

1. For a detailed account of portworker unionism 1940s-1960s, see Waterman (1982:Ch.2).

2. Zealous readers are reminded that detailed references can be found in the long draft from which this work has been condensed, and that the original documents can be found in the microfiche archives (Waterman 1979b,e,f and 1980c), where they are structured chronologically and by union, company or government department.

3. I was fortunate enough to be present at this event on December 16, 1976. The account is drawn from my notes.

4. While Imoudu was speaking there took place, uncommented and probably unnoticed by anyone apart from myself, the following spectacle: 20 ragged dockworkers staggered through the canteen from a store-room, carrying bundles of stinking and insect-covered stockfish. It was part of the government fixed-price supplies which the NPA had somehow forgotten to distribute. Imoudu did not see this section of the Nigerian working class, and they responded by showing no sign of recognising him.

5. Although we have no sources for one of the three bodies affiliated to the JCR - the NPA Fire Service Association (NPAFSA) - we have plentiful material on both the other - the NPA Junior Supervisory Staff Association of Nigeria (NPAJSSAN) and the NPA Craftsmen and Allied Workers Union (NPAC&AWU). We likewise have more than sufficient material on the JCR itself, this covering groups of workers who at one time allied themselves to it directly and informally.

6. Almost all my documentation on the R&PT&CSU is on the period since 1973. This is the period in which that union established its predominance within NPA. For the period before 1973 I am largely dependent on indirect evidence from other sources.

7. I know of this organisation only that it was in existence in 1957, that it applied to join the International Transportworkers Federation in 1958, obtained check-off rights in 1962 and made a submission to Beckley in 1967.

8. Nigeria was at this time in its sixth year of an increasingly unpopular military regime and suffering a rapidly rising rate of inflation. The somewhat eccentric characterisation of the country therefore requires explanation. The article from which the quotations are taken is one on why workers should pay union dues and is written by the magazine's editor, Augustine Ayo. The explanation that suggests itself from the style of the article is that its editor lifted it from an American source, simply changing the names of the countries and the organisations. Perhaps the editor was under more direct America influence, since his implicit denial of US and CIA influence is in striking contrast with the position of Adebola himself reported below.

9. I was present at this sitting and the following account is from my notes.

# Chapter 7
# DOCKWORKER UNIONISM: MODERATE IMPOTENCE; RADICAL SUICIDE

This chapter reveals the rise of a militant general workers union amongst the dockworkers, but also the crisis of that organisation and strategy. It begins with a short historical background. It then considers in turn two enterprise unions and the two competing general unions - one moderate and one radical.

Given the fractured nature of the docklabour industry and the casual nature of dockwork, it is not surprising that the creation of stable organisations has been much more difficult than with portworkers. Rather than trace here the complex historical development of dockworker unionism (see Table 7.1), I will mention briefly the types of organisation that appear to have existed before 1968. The basic units were either 1) classical company unions like the Biney Workers Union (BWU) or the Bakare Dockworkers Union (BDWU); or 2) 'craft' unions like the Union of Tally Clerks (UTC), the Customs Casual Shipping Labour Union (CCSLU), the Nigerian Boardship Ports Security Workers Union (NBSPSWU); or 3) multi-enterprise unions like the Asajoquan Dockworkers Union (ADWU) combining workers of Assaf, Johnson, Quayside (or Quick) and others.

The rise and fall of industry-level amalgamations is more difficult to follow than the careers of the major dockworker leaders. At the level of the Port there arose in the 1950s a number of resilient trade union leaders still active even in 1977. The first was A.E. Okon. He set up a tally clerks union around 1950 and two successive amalgamations of dockers unions in 1950 and 1961. He was the first Secretary of the NMTUF in 1955, and visited the British unions, the British Dock Labour Board and the headquarters of Elder Dempster in Liverpool in 1956. In 1959 he was elected to the Central Working Committee of the newly-created, moderate-reformist, TUC of Nigeria. In 1961-2 Okon was the Nigerian representative to the Congress of the ITF, where he was elected as one of two Africans to its Executive Board. Okon was always a moderate reformist, as his national and international affiliations might suggest. He was a convinced believer in the industrial relations ideology of the British government, manage-

## Table 7.1. List of Nigerian dockworker organisations (1948-77), with available details

| Name | Abbrev-iation | Reg. No. | Reg. Year | Check-Off |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dockworkers Union of Nigeria | DWUofN | 144 | 1948 | |
| Customs Casual Shipping Labour Union | CCSLU | 190 | | |
| Union of Tally Clerks of Nigeria | UTC | 200 | | |
| Biney's Workers Union | BWU | 203 | 1950 | |
| Amalgamated Dockworkers Union of Nigeria and the Cameroons | ADWUofN&C | 216 | 1950 | |
| Nigerian Boardship Ports Security Workers Union | NBPSWU | | | |
| Nigerian Maritime Trade Unions Federation | NMTUF | | (1955)[d] | |
| Nigerian Stevedores and Dockworkers Union | NS&DWU | 405 | 1956 | |
| Biney Workers Union | BWU | 464 | 1956 | |
| Nigerian Dockers Transport and General Workers Union | NDT&GWU | 216 | 1961 | |
| Nigerian Stevedoring African Workers Union[a] | NSAWU | 600 | | |
| Bakare Dockworkers Union | BDWU | 602 | | |
| Nigerian Union of Ship Cleaners | NUSC | | 1962 | |
| National Council of Nigerian Dockers and Seamen | Council | | (1963) | |
| General Contractors and Stevedoring and Dockworkers Union[b] | GC&S&DWU | 784 | 1963 | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Federation of Nigerian Dock Worker Union | FNDWU | | (1963) | |
| Mid-West Dockworkers Union[b] | M-WDWU | | 1963[b] | |
| Joint Committee of Dockworkers | Joint Committee | | (1963-4) | |
| Joint Action Committee | JAC | | (1964) | |
| Railway and Ports and Dockworkers Workers Union of Nigeria[c] | R&P&DWUN | 1 | (1964) | |
| W. Biney Youth Association of Nigerian Dock Worker | WBYA | | (1964) | |
| Federation of Nigerian Dockworkers | FNDW | | (1965) | |
| Asajoquan Dockworkers Union | ADWU | 1090 | 1966 | |
| Amalgamated Dockworkers Transport and General Workers Union | ADWT&GWU/ Amalgamation | | 1967 | 1968 |
| Biney Staff Association | BSA | 1169 | 1968 | 1970 |
| Akere Dockworkers Union | ADU | 1396 | 1971 | |
| Amalgamated Dockworkers Transport and General Workers Union (NTUC affiliated) | ADWT&GWU(N) | | (1968) | |
| Amalgamated Dockworkers Transport and General Workers Union (ULC affiliated) | ADWT&GWU(U) | | (1973) | |

Sources: These are extremely varied and contradictory, but include Labour Reports, the Urhobo Report (1970: 7-9), documents of the Registrar of Trade Unions, letters and interview material.

Notes: a) Port Harcourt based; b) Sapele based; c) actually the R&PWUN led by Imoudu and registered as No.1 in 1940; d) brackets indicate foundation dates of unregistered organisations (these are usually amalgamations, which cannot be registered under law; note that both the ADWUofN&C and the ADWT&GWU were nonetheless both registered, the latter even being granted check-off rights).

ment and unions. Unfortunately for him, however, he could convince neither the Nigerian government nor the contractors of his ideology. Moreover, he was unable to translate his successes at national and international level into solid organisation or undisputed leadership at the industrial level. He was challenged not only by certain radicals, but also by men who shared his ideology but disputed his position.

The radical opposition that existed for three or four years in the 1960s was in the hands of Jonas Abam and Sidi Khayam. Abam went to Britain in 1949, working in engineering and training as a printer. Whilst in Britain he came in contact with Sidi Khayam. With Abam, Khayam seems to have been associated first with the Young Communist League and then with the (Trotskyist) Socialist Labour League. Khayam and Abam returned to Nigeria at the end of the 1950s. Whilst still in Britain, Khayam became General Secretary of the Nigerian Union of Seamen. He was a leader of the leftwing Independent United Labour Congress in 1961 and of the communist-linked Nigerian Trade Union Congress (NTUC) in 1963. Around 1960 Abam became the leader of the Nigerian Stevedores and Dockworkers Union (NS&DWU). Khayam and Abam worked together in a council to create the basis for a major dock strike in 1963. Considering that the left had failed to support the 1963 dock strike and to fully exploit the 1964 General Strike (Kiomenesekenegha 1966:182) they abandoned it and began to seek for leadership of the dockers within the right-wing United Labour Congress of Nigeria (ULC). They achieved their aims through the Amalgamated Dockworkers Transport and General Workers Union (ADWT&GWU), with Khayam as General Secretary and Abam as National Organising Secretary. However, in the 18 months preceding the 1968 dock strike that destroyed it they were unable to convert the warring factions and money-seeking officers into a viable organisation.

The various dock union amalgamations built by such men suffered from a very high death rate, since they had no effective means of collecting funds or imposing any discipline on their member organisations. Given that the latter were frequently themselves of a dubious reality, the amalgamations tended to be so as well. Such power as the amalgamations had came from their association with the national trade union centres, and with the foreign and international trade union centres beyond. For many years A.E. Okon had just this kind of moral and financial backing. The International Transportworkers Federation (ITF) claims the credit for having helped create the ADWT&GWU in 1966 (ITF 1976). The brief radical challenge by Sidi Khayam and Jonas Abam was likewise based on national and international backing (although one doubts whether they got much money from abroad).

Many of the problems revealed here continued into the 1970s. We will see the continuing weakness and dependency of basic-level organisations, the domination of port-level dockworker organisation by a few leaders, and continuing conflict between competing amalgamations. But in this period we will see the division into a continuing moderate-radical split at port level echoing that of the portworker unions. The nature of this development and reasons for the parallel will have to be considered in the next chapter, as will the continuing absence of common organisation and action between port and dockworkers.

Our account of dockworker organisation must begin in the later 1960s. This was a crucial turning point for Lagos dockworkers, not so much because of the transformation of national labour control strategy that began with the Civil War, as of the new organisations that came into being at this time. These organisations, at both company and port level, continued in existence throughout the 1970s.

## 7.1. Enterprise unions

Whatever Table 7.1 might suggest, or that competing leaders might claim, there were practically no basic-level unions in existence in the mid-1970s. The only ones for which it was possible to find any evidence were the two enterprise-based organisations to be dealt with here.

Whatever the reasons for the disappearance of the Biney Workers' Union (Waterman 1982:Section 3.1.2), it did not take long before it was considered necessary to revive it, if under the new name of Biney Staff Association (BSA).[1] By 1968 the new organisation was officially registered, its initiators being largely the same junior supervisory staff as previously. What is remarkable about the BSA is not only this continuity with the BWU, but the relative absence of change in its leadership, strategy and activities during the following ten years. The confinement of the organisation to the one company, its absence of any significant relations with others outside, and the failure of the outside organisations to make any significant attack on this fortress - all these elements removed those stimuli to change that one finds elsewhere amongst portworker and dockworker unions alike. It appears as if Chief Biney and his junior supervisors had found a formula which neither outside forces nor internal discontent were able to alter.

Given that Biney's actively sponsored its own unions, considered them a part of management, sought to isolate them from others, and had unlimited power of discipline and dismissal over its labour, one would not expect to find either the BWU (1950 to 1965?) or BSA

(1968-1978) holding distinctly different views from the Managing Director. We do, thus, find the unions praising the company as the 'oldest and best-experienced' and the one that has trained most of the other dock labour contractors (BSA Registration Ceremony Documents 1968), or calling for 'a day's work for a fair day's pay' (BSA Conference Documents 1969). Alhaji Yusufu Balogun, President of the BSA in 1976, echoed managerial views on the role of the unions: 'We are for the progress of the workers and of management'. When Biney's own staff went on strike during the Udoji disturbances of 1975,

> The Union President (Alhaji Katsina) after paying respects to the Managing Director and others on the management side expressed utter regret for the strike action which to his knowledge was the first time in the history of the company.

He also 'prayed for continued progress of the company'. When management conceded a 40 percent wage increase (in face of a 100 percent initial request),

> An abundant amount of prayers were...showered on the Managing Director and the company for long life, health and continued stability for Biney organisation all over the wharves of the Federation. (Biney Minutes, February 18, 1975).

When a strike was called throughout the port in May 1974, the BSA not only disassociated itself from it but declared

> that should any industrial action be precipitated, it is prepared to carry on and ensure the smooth flow of traffic through the major ports of the country, provided it is given adequate and continued protection by the law-enforcing agencies. (Daily Times, May 20, 1974)

Hopes for the continued progress of the company were not expressed solely in pious form, nor addressed solely to otherworldly powers. In statements addressed to the government or public, unions at Biney's identified themselves with private ownership in general and with Biney ownership in particular.

Whilst this reveals the general orientation of the BSA towards the company, it did make occasional efforts to present itself as a conventional Nigerian trade union. At its founding conference in 1968, a headman delegate, Tijani Dada,

> stressed that the Union must be made a real

> life wire for the workers. It should be dynamic and it should pursue the set down aims and objects without fear to gain the confidence of the workers, bearing in mind the fate of the former Unions.

A wharf labourer, Amusa Rufai,

> appealed to the leaders and all members to eschew back talks and betrayal attitude as members were still afraid they could be betrayed.

Other leaders and delegates stressed problems of wage rates, overtime, sick leave, training, promotion, victimisation, etc.

A major effort was made by the new organisation to create a conventional collective bargaining relationship within the company. A formal grievance and negotiation procedure was being worked on at this time. And we know that the 1968 conference had drawn up a list of demands on the company. But it took another year, and the declaration of a trade dispute, before management finally agreed even to a negotiation procedure that was of little disadvantage to itself and of only symbolic advantage to the BSA. Nonetheless, the union leadership, company management, and the man who was consultant to them both - Beyioku - must have felt that the basis had been laid for effective bipartite collective bargaining within the company, with recourse to a tripartite relationship (appeal to government) in the case of deadlock.

Any such hope must have been at least shaken by a protest movement of the ordinary labourers that took place in January 1969, almost directly after the conference. This involved two separate strikes and it required Chief Biney to hold one of his extended courts/tribunals. Both the protest itself and the evidence that the inquiry provides on the nature and structure of the BSA will be dealt with later. What is significant for the development of the BSA as an organisation is the apparent lack of impact of the strike. Thus, the tone of the following conference seems rather to have been set by Chief Biney's opening address (BSA Conference Documents 1969). Despite the dramatic events of early 1969, this declared that

> To the best of the knowledge of the company, no appreciable disagreement has been reached on any important matter, other than the suspension of those matters which could have far reaching effect...on the general economic prospect of the company...both now and in the future.

The 'matters suspended' appeared from the General Secretary's report to include most of the issues on which management had stalled at the end of the previous year: pensions, annual leave, sick leave, increments for company staff, wages, staff overtime. Likewise, the union's successes appeared to be largely limited to what had been conceded at that meeting: restoration of leave for headmen, certain overtime arrears, etc. The major successes stressed by the union were those regarding appointments and promotions. Thus, EC members Lawal and Oshunsheyi had been appointed to senior grades, and the union was pressing hard for Karimu Katsina to be likewise promoted. A number of headmen had been promoted to the rank of supervisor, despite an 'initial objection that they could not be said to be literate persons'. The union was also attempting continue the traditional veto on appointments exercised by the old BWU. Thus, it had challenged the promotion of a Mr Yankee to senior foreman, considering that he had been promoted not for his qualifications but for 'extraneous considerations'. It had in June 1969 complained at the 'irregular' promotion of certain men to headman category and managed to get these withdrawn. And it had managed to obtain the reversal of the suspension of Mr Savage, an allocation clerk.

The union was, however, apparently feeling the pressure either of the unofficial strikes that had occurred in January, or of the activity of the radical successor to the ADWT&GWU. This had raised general dockworker demands concerning decasualisation and taken strike action in July 1969. The 1969 Presidential Address, which one year previously had spoken favourably of strike action, now actually drew back from it. Although distancing himself from militant action, President Katsina also felt it necessary to complain that the union was 'not altogether satisfied with the general put off attitude' of the management. He declared that the union should 'steer clear of any aspect which could raise up any suspicion of its being a Home [house? PW] Union'. And this desire apparently led Katsina to now declare that things had developed to a stage at which 'the Union must exercise its rights of industrial action'. What these threats boiled down to was, apparently, the declaration for the first time in Biney union history of a trade dispute. The dispute had been declared in September, and concerned the failure to draw up the negotiation agreement, overtime, etc. This action was apparently sufficient to get management to finally sign a document on November 15, 1969.

Such information as we have for later years does not suggest any significant change in the nature or activities of the BSA. Attempts at negotiation on leave and the other traditional issues were repeated. The union leadership continued with its attempts to get

advancement or reinstatement for certain union officers or other favoured staff, and to obtain the dismissal of certain others. Although the evidence is inconclusive, it seems possible that the BSA was better able to get rid of someone it disliked than to obtain the appointment or promotion of someone it did like. It would have been easier for the headmen to passively obstruct the work of a given officer than to have actively demonstrated in favour or one.

Perhaps the only occasion on which the union really began to go beyond its traditional role was during the nationwide euphoria of the massive Udoji awards in early 1975. It seems on this occasion to have actually demanded massive wage increases and to have organised a brief stoppage (see Chapter 15). However, its extreme demands and initial militancy were rapidly replaced by deep apologies, massive concessions and expressions of deep gratitude for what Chief Biney eventually saw fit to offer.

Later in 1975 we find the union once again denouncing strike action and declaring that Biney's had given the workers their entitlements without force. Such sentiments were much more to the taste of Biney than the strike action to which the BSA had actually resorted, and he once again complemented the union for demonstrating by 'eschewing undue force and bitterness...your fitness to be reckoned with as a real trade union organisation'. By declaring a dispute in 1969 and taking - however briefly - industrial action in 1975, the union might appear to have been moving toward becoming just such a union.

The major restriction on a movement away from clientalism would seem to have been not so much Biney's unrestricted power to hire and fire but the composition of the BSA as an organisation. Whilst this is a matter to be considered mainly in Part III, it must be stated here that - like its predecessor - the BSA was primarily an organisation of headmen and junior supervisors.

The only other enterprise-based union on which we have evidence is the Akere Dockworkers Union (ADU).[2] Akere had a monopoly of shorehandling on Customs Quay until the quay was closed to make way for a new road in December 1976. Akere was also one of the larger and better-established contractors, employing a couple of thousand labourers. The ADU is the only claimed affiliate of the moderate ADWT&GWU(U) for which any evidence of existence can be found. Indeed, its existence and operation as an organisation (rather than just a group of leaders) is better attested to than that of the ADWT&GWU(U) itself! This is, of course, because its Secretary was the redoubtable A.E. Okon. Thus, it was possible in 1975 to find a 1971 return for the ADU

in the files of the Registrar of Trade Unions. This indicated a membership of just over 1,000, an income of £N188, and a detailed list of expenses. Despite its experienced General Secretary, the union was not without its difficulties with the Registrar. Correspondence from 1973 suggested that it had had no bank account, and that it owed money to Akere himself for constitutions that the company had printed. However, the ADU seems to have been the only base union apart from the BSA that was capable of holding conferences.

The 1974 conference was held at the Trade Union Institute of the AALC and ULC. The Presidential Address mentioned a number of disputes with management, concerning arrears of pay, National Provident Fund (NPF) benefits and nightwork. The arrears issue was taken to the Ministry, where the matter was resolved, workers eventually obtaining several hundred nairas of back pay. The union declared that

> The arrears we were entitled to collect was for one year but we had to take a number of issues into consideration and this made us collect from the management arrears for six months. (ADU Conference Documents 1974).

Another 'burning issue' was that of the failure of the workers to receive any accounts for their NPF payments. This matter remained unresolved (as, of course, it did for all the dockworkers). The General Secretary's report raised the usual common dockworker grievances, and the old proposals for collective bargaining machinery, a Dock Labour Scheme, welfare facilities, etc.

Interviews with five or six voluntary officers of the ADU in 1975 showed them all to be headmen of preference gangs. They reported Akere's attitude toward them as being one of limited tolerance. On the one hand he permitted the union to function. On the other, he had sacked unionists without the required notice or benefits, and had suspended others following the Udoji strikes in January 1975. The officers claimed that, through fear of victimisation, most headmen did not support the union and that most support came from the regularly-employed general labourers.

Whatever the dependency and weakness of this organisation, it seems to have been more independent of the contractor than the BSA. There is no reason to doubt the word of the officers concerning the base of the union. If, within Biney's, we see the leadership basically identifying upwards, then it is quite possible that this one (with no supervisors amongst its leaders) was identifying downwards. Enterprise-based unions are not <u>inevitably</u> clientalist unions. This one had more the characteristics of the typical Nigerian factory union. The limitations of this form in the

docks, however, were shown in dramatic and tragic form when Akere lost his contract and the union, consequently, its base. The ADU leaders then became, once again, casual labourers subject to the conditions common to all Lagos dockworkers. On June 20, 1977, 13 ADU members who had obtained employment with the new NCHC were sacked. The 13 included the veteran moderate union leader, A.R.D. Oriola. It was rumoured within the industry that the men had used N7,000 of ADU funds in order to bribe NCHC management to promote them. They were detained for three days and were then released on bail whilst charges were considered. The charges were denied by Okon, who declared a trade dispute with the NCHC over the affair (Evening Times, August 18, 1977). Whatever the truth of this affair, the Akere unionists must by now have begun to consider the advantages of a portwide organisation.

## 7.2 The traditional moderates

If the two enterprise-based unions proved in this period to be inadequate instruments for the articulation of dockworker needs, then we need to consider the capacity of portwide organisations to serve them. But first we need to distinguish between the original ADWT&GWU and what we will be calling the ADWT&GWU(U) and the ADWT&GWU(N). The original ADWT&GWU collapsed after a major dock strike in 1968. Its spiritual heirs then disappeared for some years from the Lagos scene. They revived their organisation in 1972-3, within the framework of the ULC (therefore the 'U'). The original organisation was taken over in 1968-9 by a group of radicals, who affiliated it to the NTUC (therefore the 'N'). In the account of the moderate ADWT&GWU(U)[3] that follows it will be necessary to go back to the original ADWT&GWU in order to understand the reason for the split and its consequences. The original amalgamation was created by the collaboration of the moderate dockworker unionists, with the blessings of the Ministry of Labour, and the support of the ULC, the International Transportworkers Federation (ITF) and the African-American Labour Centre (AALC). The new leadership was in crisis immediately after its creation due to constitutional and legal problems and leadership conflicts within the merging unions.

The identification of this tendency with liberal-paternalist norms and institutions was made clear - frequently and publicly - as was its distaste for strikes. In reaction to a strike led by its radical opponents, the union declared:

> As long as there is no National Joint Industrial Council for collective bargaining, so will industrial harmony continue to evade us in the industry and chaos shall continue. (ADWT&GWU(U) Petition, September 21, 1974).

On the occasion of another strike threat, Abam warned workers against it (Daily Times, September 30, 1974), stating,

> The wage talks will start when the dock labour scheme is introduced and accredited dock labour contractors registered with the government are known.

He stressed that it was wrong to make workers feel that they could improve their conditions without such a scheme and a JIC and

> emphasised that violence was not the best method of settling industrial disputes and would not be to the best interest of dock workers.

Whilst in the early 1960s its General Secretary, Jonas Abam, had favoured nationalisation of the dock labour industry, in May 1977 he declared in an interview that

> Now I will not say this openly because of the lack of understanding amongst dockworkers and also because of the government we have and a lot of interests involved.

In examining the development of the moderate tendency, we must go back to the period running from its foundation to its temporary demise in early 1969. A useful way to do this is through examination of a remarkably frank, detailed and prescient document produced by Jonas Abam, then National Organiser of the original amalgamation (ADWT&GWU Memorandum, May 1967). The document begins thus:

> It is five months since the Amalgamation took place. Since then, apart from the efforts we made towards the establishment of the National Dock Labour Scheme, we have not done anything concretely to raise the standard of living and better the conditions of services for the dockworkers we represent.

Abam went on to warn that if this was not done, the organisation would lose not only the support of the dockworkers, 'but also of our friends abroad'. He reminded the leadership of the conference decision that 'we should derive our strength and support from the ranks of the dockers and not from middle class dockers and employers'. He declared that despite some opposition in the docks the rank and file dockers had accepted the amalgamation. However, he added 'they are sceptical about both old and new organisations in the docks'.

The most effort had been going, as Abam pointed

out, into the effort to create the DLB, the JICs and a compulsory Dock Labour Scheme. The aims of the organisation had been set out once again right after its founding conference in a document submitted to the Beckley Tribunal (ADWT&GWU Memorandum, January 16, 1967). From this point on till the middle of 1968 it continued these efforts. Whatever success was achieved here was brought to an end by the 1968 dock strike. Indeed, the ineffectiveness of these institutions was considered by the Urhobo Tribunal (1971) to be one of the causes of the strike. Evidently the troubles of the ADWT&GWU were building up during the first half of 1968. Member organisations were disaffiliating, some kind of committee of dockworkers was being set up alongside (or within) the amalgamation, and various officers were being suspended for 'subversion'. On July 24, according to Nkamare, Secretary of the ANDLC, the union submitted an 11-page memorandum of grossly unrealistic demands for a JIC meeting that was only a few days off. According to him, the circulation of such demands was indicative that the union was 'working under pressure'. Sometime in August the police felt it necessary to report to the Registrar of Trade Unions the complaint of a dockworker that in addition to being required to pay fees to the faction of the NBSPSWU led by A.O. Fakoya, they 'were forced to pay other Enrolment and Membership Fees to the Amalgamation before they were issued Cards' (Urhobo Report 1971:19).

The nature of the opposition groups that came into existence within the amalgamation is not entirely clear since several of them may have had overlapping 'memberships' as well as similar names. (For an attempt to unravel them see Waterman 1979h:Ch.4). The strike that occurred in 1968 was as much a protest against the leadership of the ADWT&GWU as it was against the contractors or the government. This will be shown in Chapter 15. What is of significance here is that as a result of the splits and the strike the original leaders, Jonas Abam and Sidi Khayam, lost not only the confidence of the rank and file activists, but also that of their erstwhile colleagues and - more importantly - of their national and international sponsors. Radicals grouped around a militant illiterate docker, Endeley Olagboshe, declared the deposition of the old leaders and their affiliation to the NTUC.

Khayam and his supporters did not, of course, take their deposition quietly. In October there took place a two-day conference of the formal leadership of the amalgamation. This attacked dissidents, proposed an investigation into 'allegations of corruption and inefficiency', and called for a First Annual Conference in early January. Amongst the dissidents were evidently two other veteran moderates, Okon and Onyewu, since Khayam felt it necessary to advise contractors to have no dealings with them and to disregard Okon's claims to

be the General Secretary (Khayam to Contractors, November 20, 1968). On January 9-11, 1969, Khayam and his supporters organised their own conference at Sapele and elected a new leadership. Those dropped from the 1966 leadership included not only Okon and Onyewu but also such other moderates as Balogun, Ishola, Ayorinde, Eluma and Gbaminido. The new leadership appeared to be little more than the personal following of Abam and Khayam. Moreover, it was refused government recognition, and it looks as if both the ITF and the Americans had temporarily washed their hands of the organisation. Khayam seems then to have abandoned the dockers for his firmer base amongst the seamen. And Abam quit Lagos and unionism for several years.

This was the end of another attempt at creating a moderate portwide organisation amongst the dockers. In a sense, the moderates can be said to have signed their own death warrant and written their own epitaph. But, in fact, they only went into retirement. There were few signs of their presence within the Port during the next two or three years. The first evidence that the organisation we are now calling the ADWT&GWU(U) was back in action came when it issued the first of many press statements on the sufferings of the dockers. The statement purported to have issued from a conference. Remarkable is its claim for the workers of the 'balance' of the 1971 Adebo award, and its complaint that

> certain international organisations which are interested in the good living of the Nigerian dockworkers such as the Afro-American Labour Centre, had donated essential materials to the management of the NPA for the provision of...significant factors to life in our docks, but up till today the Lagos dockworkers have not seen these things being erected. (ADWR&GWU(U) Statement, 1972).

The demand for the Adebo 'balance' appears to have been a purely verbal attempt to outbid the radicals, who had led the dockworkers on one or two successful strikes in 1971. The reference to the toilet facilities indicates how out of touch the moderates were with Apapa. The facilities were opened on December 15, 1970, but they were handed over to the NPA and its unions rather than to the dockers for whom they were meant (AALC Reporter, January 1971). In May we see Okon, supposedly as Secretary of the ADWT&GWU(U), again complaining about the toilets, and as always demanding the integrated dock labour scheme (New Nigerian, May 19, 1972). The moderates themselves held a conference on December 12, 1973, at which the amalgamation was 'reconstituted'. Once again, this was done with the goodwill and encouragement of the Ministry, and the active assistance or finance of the ULC, ITF and the AALC. The leaders of the new body included such veterans of the 1950s and

1960s as A.E. Okon, Jonas Abam, G.A. Brown, Eluma, Oriola, Dianu, etc. The organisation could thus legitimately claim to be the continuation of the 1966 amalgamation.

1975 was the year of Udoji. Once again the radicals led a successful strike and follow-up action, as a result of which the general labour rate rose from N1.32 to N2.42 - with a massive lump sum in back pay. Abam, on the other hand, seems to have spent most of his time writing letters and organising meetings. There was a letter proposing negotiations to the Ministry of Labour in late December, a discussion with the Ministry on January 2, and an appeal to the Biney and Bakare unions on January 3. This was for a meeting to take place at Chief Beyioku's office on January 8. Meanwhile,

> we have asked all our branches to withhold any action until the outcome of the meeting ...so that if the need arises, it will be effective throughout all the ports. (ADWT-&GWU(U) to Biney and Bakare Unions, January 3, 1975).

Abam's union made a claim based on the new rate for NPA-employed dockworkers (a by-now non-existent category). This implied an increase from the current general labour rate of N1.32 to N3.05. Although the second of these letters spoke of an 'ultimatum' it in fact contained no threat of industrial action. Throughout 1975, the moderates were repeatedly protesting that the 'wrong' anount had been paid to the dockers, and that the 'right' rate was N3.05.

1976 was a dramatic year for the trade union movement as a whole, with government moving towards its administrative restructuring. Within the Port there were increasing signs that the government was going to wipe out most of the contractors and finally introduce the Integrated Cargo Handling Scheme. There was also a major new dispute over wage rates. Before dealing with this last issue, it is important to consider the moderates' position on the ICHS. Its document (ADWT&GWU(U) Statement, April 26, 1976) was, in fact the most sophisticated and technical one ever produced by a dockworker union, and one with a quite distinct radical-nationalist tone. It stated that tonnage per hook had dropped from eight or nine tons in the 1950s to three in the 1970s. It blamed the shipping companies and agencies for taking the lion's share of the cargo-handling money, thus forcing the contractors to cheat the labourers 'in order to rake out some profit'. It attacked the 'imperialist shipping agents', and the 'colonialist shipping companies of the Conference lines'. It also attacked both the 'mushroom contractors' and (without naming it) Biney's:

> The Company which is dominated by a Ghanaian should not be considered, whether Nigerians have share or not. The bulk of the profit milked out from Nigerian dockworkers went to a Ghanaian who had no regard for Nigeria.

In a stronger political tone than had been heard from Abam since his marxist days, the document continued as follows:

> The progressive policy of the government is a big threat to world imperialism and their big investment in Africa. The Imperialists will therefore find ways and means to sabotage our economy. We cannot be sure whom they will make use of. The treatment meeted on Nigerians by Ghana, Zaire and Sudan are very fresh in our minds. We have been over-generous to others while others have not reciprocated our generosity.

In positive terms the ADWT&GWU(U) demanded preference to non-conference shipping lines (whether Nigerian or foreign was not specified), and contractors limited to but three private companies, these being reputable Nigerian

> employers ready to employ experts from overseas to make our dock effective. We should admit we still lag behind. The few dock labour employers should make it a point of duty to employ world renowned experts of dock operation with recommendation from the United Nations.

This detailed and sophisticated case was probably not worked out by the union itself but obtained from an officer within a Nigerian shipping agency - and one that had no particular love for the company of W.H. Biney. Interviewing a foreign port labour specialist within this agency I heard similar arguments and exactly the same figures used.

Whilst this would seem to suggest the continuing dependency of the ADWT&GWU(U), it now began to change its attitude toward industrial action. Up until late 1975 the ADWT&GWU(U) acted in strict character with its predecessor. As a result, it made no impact on the dockers, and neither the Ministry, nor the NPA, nor the contractors took it seriously. All of them knew that in practice they had to negotiate with the radicals. This, at long last, had a radicalising effect on the moderates and - as we will see - a moderating one on the radicals.

In December 1975 Abam's group had distributed leaflets on the Udoji underpayment. It had also issued

a 21-day ultimatum threatening industrial action. When the General Manager of the NPA told it that it was a 'grave offence for a union to deliberately incite and lead its members' against the government, the union backed down, apologised, and explained that the ultimatum was 'part of its strategy to prevent a strike action by the Dockworkers' (ADWT&GWU(U)-NPA Minutes, December 9, 1975). Despite this characteristic timidity, the union persisted with its case, and NPA management was obliged to meet with it twice more before the year end. The issues being pressed by the union were the Adebo 'arrears' and Udoji 'underpayment'. The second meeting on this matter took place with only 24 hours to run before the union's ultimatum to take industrial action expired. When the union refused to withdraw its ultimatum, the General Manager said that he would have to end the meeting so that management could take 'some pre-emptive steps to deal with the proposed strike action'. Faced with this threat, the union again backed down and 'assured the Chairman that it would not embark on strike action'. It settled for promises of action by the GM and a meeting at the end of the first week in January 1976. According to top leaders of the radical faction, Abam actually did try to organise a strike on January 12, 1976, this failing due to their advising workers against it. They did not only advise workers, since, according to Abam, he was in January 1976 arrested and accused of incitement to strike:

> This was on the denunciationn of Dediare [Lagos Port Manager. PW] and Odulana...Just because I was down at Akere's. Odulana and his friends were going around with plain-clothesmen pointing out our people. (Interview Notes, December 1976).

We will see when we look at the radicals that there is reason to believe Abam's account. In April 1976 there began a dispute in the docks over the application to dock labour of the five-day week government had announced for the private sector. At the end of November, the moderates signed a settlement with the NPA on the basis of the NPA announcement that it was to pay the contractors new rates sufficient for them to pay five days as for six, the whole being backdated to April 1. Although they failed to get a deadline for the publication of the new rates, the NPA listed this as December 14 in a later agreement signed with the radicals. Anxious to obtain credit for the new rates, the moderates summoned the contractors to the Excelsior Hotel in Apapa, and called a 'mass meeting' at the Port Labour Office (which I observed to be actually attended by 15-20 men). The moderates apparently treated December 14 as the date the backpay would be issued to the workers, and the latter began to look forward to a grand Xmas bonus. When, on December 14, there was no

sign of it, the moderates used this as a pretext for calling their first dockwide strike. Details of this event will be given in Chapter 15. The speedy success of the strike, with contractors promising two days later that they would pay out the lump-sum back pay on December 20, must have been almost as surprising to these unlikely militants as it was pleasing to the Lagos dockworkers and frustrating to the traditional radicals.

## 7.3. The new radicals

Although we could trace the origins of the ADWT&GWU (N)[4] back to the early 1960s, it took its new form only with the 1968 dock strike. Before then, the NTUC could only claim the affiliations of the Nigerian Boardship Port Security Workers Union (NBSPSWU) and that of the Bakare Dockworkers Union (Urhobo 1971: 35) and both of these affiliations were disputed.

Nonetheless, the NTUC cadre, Bernard Odulana, did have a toehold in the Port as leader of one faction of the NBSPSWU, and it was therefore natural that he should be given the secretaryship when the Endeley Olagboshe group turned to the NTUC in 1968. The worst that could be said about the role of the NTUC at the Urhobo inquiry was, in the words of one moderate trade unionist, that

> Endeley is being teleguided by the NTUC to create faction in [the ADWT&GWU]. There are respectable gentlemen in the NTUC to realise the importance that election such as the one they are now backing can never stand the test of time. The NTUC probably has an eye on the docks to swell its affiliation and prestige? (Urhobo 1971: 31).

This judgement was wrong on every point except the last. Olagboshe had approached the NTUC, not the other way round, and the election stood the test of time rather well. The Olagboshe adhesion was a surprise windfall for the NTUC and the Beckley Tribunal provided the latter with a rare public stage from which to demand nationalisation of the industry, denounce the ULC and demand the expulsion from Nigeria of the AALC.

Before dealing further with the development of the organisation, let us pay some more attention to its labour relations ideology. The attitudes of radicals in the 1970s differed clearly from Abam's on the question of industrial structure and - less clearly - on forms of bargaining. Interviewed in summer 1975 on the organisation of the industry, Bernard Odulana, General Secretary of the ADWT&GWU(N) declared:

> We are for total nationalisation. There is no

> way to get contractors to meet worker needs. There must be a corporation on its own. It must be independent of NPA because of red tape. The NCHC could be a nucleus for this.

The attitude to the forms of bargaining within the industry certainly differed in practice from those of the ADWT&GWU(N), but is difficult to find stated. Whilst his organisation was being discriminated against, Odulana rejected out of hand the 'idea of negotiation with dock employers of labour as being suggested in some quarters' (New Nigerian, January 10, 1975), since this had never worked since 1947. On the other hand, once informal bilateral bargaining had been established, Odulana made a statement to the contractors that is worth quoting at length:

> We welcome you to this important meeting which we summon to find ways and means of achieving industrial peace in the docks....we are not abandoning our militancy. But we consider the country first and we know fully well that the gigantic programme of the Federal Military Government can only be successfully carried out if we have smooth working conditions in the docks. Our stand, like all other Nigerians is that we are committed to the fulfilment of the Third National Plan...We call on you to cooperate. For this period we can assure all concerned that there will be no stoppage of work. Any contractor whose behaviour is capable of leading to industrial unrest in the docks, rather than stopping work we shall call for his removal...We are happy to report that when we met the Commissioner for Transport on the provision of facilities, e.g. adequate toilets, water, etc., he promised taking action and we are convinced that he meant business. Please let us discuss frankly with a view to achieving our objectives. (ADWT-&GWU(N) Address, May 28, 1975. Stress in original).

It should be noted that unionists at industrial level commonly felt the necessity to comment not only on a bargaining relationship between existing parties, but also on the industrial ownership pattern as a whole. Where unions confined themselves to the former issue, they tended to identify themselves with the concepts of government and the 'progressive employer', Nkamare. Whilst this would seem to put them in the same stance as the NPA unions, one must not forget that the Nkamare concept was not shared even by such a major employer as Biney. Their position was not so much an identification with existing employer ideology as a

plea for employers to adopt a new one. The radical programme, however, seems to have been moderated as the militants achieved de facto recognition over time. By 1975 the militant ADWT&GWU(N) of Odulana was itself adopting the kind of attitudes that Nkamare had called for in 1964. We will see later than this put in question its assurance that it was not abandoning its militancy.

This, however, was not clear until the later 1970s. During the period 1969-75 most of the energy of the radicals seems to have gone into the organising of strikes, with the immediate objective of increased pay, and the underlying one of both strengthening their position amongst the dockers and forcing the authorities to recognise them de facto and de jure. The demand of the union for a general labour rate of 45s at a time when the actual rate was 8s.2d is evidence that at the beginning of its career the ADWT&GWU(N) was more concerned at striking dramatic attitudes than in realistic demands and struggle. In both early and late 1971, however, the union was involved in strikes over the interim and final Adebo awards.

Between the two events, we see it involved in building up a relationship with both its provincial affiliates and the NPA. From August 30 till September 8, union leaders Odulana, Olagboshe, Adenekan and Wolseley went on tour of Warri, Sapele, Koko, Port Harcourt and Calabar, to explain the new integrated system to their members. The ICHS, as we know, was not in fact to be introduced until another seven years had passed, but the tour gave the delegation the opportunity of meeting both affiliated unions and Port Managers. The form and content of the tour report are reminiscent of those of NPA unions, right down to its complementary remarks about the Port Managers, and the comparatively mild requests for improvements. A later statement again suggests the efforts of the union to build bridges to the NPA (ADWT&GWU(N) Statement, October 21, 1971). Such efforts, however, did not prevent it from striking at the end of the year, nor again in May 1972.

1974 was the year of the Udoji Report, and therefore of high agitation and expectations amongst the workers and unions. It was also the year in which the three major dockworker organisations (the two amalgamations and the BWU) most clearly demonstrated their attitudes to industrial action, with the radicals pressing strikes through regardless of consequences, and both the others not only holding back but actively and publicly denouncing the radicals. On January 10, the radicals claim to have held a 'mammoth' meeting of 5,000 dockers, attended also by the Port Manager, at which a demand was made for an immediate 50 percent wage increase, as well as for the other customary

reforms (ADWT&GWU(N) Statement, January 28, 1974). In February it issued two leaflets calling meetings, denouncing the moderates, and announcing the expiry of a 21-day strike ultimatum. Although it seems as if the industrial action was postponed, tension with the moderates reached a point at which the police brought a case of affray against eight men, including Abam from the one side and Kayode Benson from the other. In May and September the union threatened and carried through strikes despite the anti-strike legislation, the threats of the Labour Ministry, and police threats and arrests.

All this agitation paid off when, after its customary seven days notice, the union organised successful industrial action to obtain for dockers the massive Udoji award and the lump-sum back-pay in January-February 1975. The general labour rate rose from N1.26 to N2.42 per day. Workers were to get arrears back to April 1974, implying that a labourer who had only worked 100 days since then would be getting a lump sum of around N116. It was this achievement that led workers to reward the radicals in the traditional Nigerian manner, by dashing (rewarding) them with one or two naira on the glorious payday. It was the same action that endorsed the de facto control of the radicals over the workers, thus forcing contractors, NPA and the ministries to negotiate with them. It may have been the growing self-confidence accompanying these achievements that led the ADWT&GWU(N) to apply to join the NMTUF - an application that the NMUTF felt unable to accept given the formal links of the radicals to the NTUC. And it seems to have been the same successes that led the radicals to adjust their posture in the manner revealed in the long quote from Bernard Odulana earlier.

The extent of the change in attitude by the radicals became apparent in 1976. This is how Odulana denounced Abam's first strike threat to the workers:

> I...thank you for the support you have always given the Union... despite the fact that some irresponsible people wanted to deceive you... We are happy that you have shown them that they are not known to you...You have demonstrated your confidence in us, we can assure you we will never disappoint you. We have taken up the matter [of wages and other demands] with appropriate authorities and shall be reporting the progress we have made to you soon. Don't let some few idiots incite you. We are happy that you have told them that they can no longer deceive you. (ADWT-&GWU(N) Statement, January 26, 1976).

One month later the union was welcoming the expulsion

of five leaders of its Calabar affiliate, apparently for having tried to organise a strike. The letter declared that 'there was no instruction from us to embark on any industrial action' and it 'implored' its affiliate to in future check any information with the headquarters (ADWT&GWU(N) to Cross-Rivers State Branch, February 16. 1976). The assasination of the Head of State, Murtala Muhammed, in February 1976 gave the union another opportunity to demonstrate its new-found identification with the Nigerian state. It now threatened a boycott of British ships unless former Nigerian head of state, Gowon, should be brought back to Nigeria to face government allegations of his responsibility for the attempted coup. The threat was immediately suspended on the basis of government assurances of the efforts it was making to get Gowon back (West Africa, May 10, 1976). Although the five-day week issue would seem to have given the union an opportunity to once again demonstrate its militancy, we now find it for the first time negotiating the issue through the collective bargaining machinery and directing 'that all dockworkers should not take any action until the conclusion of the series of meetings' it was holding on the issue (ADWT&GWU(N) Statement, July 29, 1976). Negotiations with the authorities and assurances to dockers continued till the moderates put an end to them by taking over the traditional role of the radicals at the end of 1976.

## 7.4 Summary

With respect to the BSA, one must recognise both the development that took place and the limits to that development. The BSA did progress beyond the secret society characteristics and the gang warfare tactics of its predecessor. Organistionally it began to take on the appearance of a regular trade union, with conference, elections, resolutions and some kind of accounts. In its relations with management it sought for the standard forms practised within the public corporations or the foreign private companies. And in 1975 it even took recourse to strike action, the fundamental symbol of autonomous trade union organisation. Since the constituency of the BSA was effectively the junior supervisory dock staff, it makes more sense to consider its demands in relation to these rather than to general dock labour, or even Biney's quite numerous non-quay manual and clerical workers. Looked at in this manner, its combination of complaints against management, of protection for threatened supervisors, and of wages and conditions demands is understandable. So is its combination of quite craven subordination to Biney himself, vociferous defence of the company against external threats, and occasional token gestures of independence. If these token acts were signs of increasing self-confidence amongst a by-now very experienced leadership, they did not indicate any in-

tention to demonstrate as much opposition as that of even the moderate NPA unions, nor to throw their lot in with the ordinary dockworkers. What prevented the BSA from becoming such an organisation was a complex of structural features which remained from the time of the BWU. These were the fact that it was limited to one local capitalist company, that its leadership was limited to the junior supervisors, and that these were largely of one ethnic group. None of these factors by themselves would necessarily have prevented the further development of the organisation, any more than the hostility of Biney toward such a union, or the pro-company attitudes of the union. Together, however, they ensured that the new characteristics of the BSA would remain peripheral to its role as representative of the junior supervisory staff to Biney, and his instrument for control of his labour force.

One's impression of the ADU is of the more customary Nigerian enterprise union than the kind of company union represented by the BSA. If what its leaders claimed about general labour's support for the union was true, then it might well have been that in this case headmen - as the more-experienced workers - were acting as leaders of the workers. But their dependency on Akere for such limited privileges and security of employment as they might have enjoyed obviously put restrictions on their militancy. The price they eventually paid for constructing a union on an enterprise basis has been made clear.

So much for the enterprise-based organisations. What of the attempts at portwide organisation?

In discussing the collapse of the original ADWT&GWU in 1968, it was suggested that this made its own comment on the value of a moderate policy and strategy to dockworkers. Such a conclusion was not drawn by the moderates themselves, nor by their national and foreign patrons. The revival of the project in 1972-3 took place with exactly the same strategy. The major difference was that - Okon apart - the moderates had no unions in Lagos and that they were faced with an organised, determined and effective opposition. For two or three years the ADWT&GWU(U) remained a paper organisation, making paper threats based on purely legalistic demands.

What requires commentary is its conversion to radical nationalism in word and industrial militancy in practice during 1976. The 'radical nationalist' document turns out on closer examination to be one that is in general accord with the interests of capitalists within the cargo-handling industry. It is not simply anti-imperialist, it is also chauvinist in its attacks on other African countries. It is not simply pro-capitalist, it also favours some capitalists within the

cargo-handling industry against the one who actually had the best record both for working conditions and for efficiency. Indeed, its attacks on conference line ships, and its praise for foreign experts makes it look as if this document would be particularly pleasing to those amongst the contractors who were employing such foreign experts and who were either dependent on small foreign shipping lines, or were themselves involved in shipping.

If the ADWT&GWU(U) was in 1976 championing the interests of Nigerian capitalists within the cargo-handling industry, how are we to explain its industrial militancy? In the first place, we must recall that wage demands are demands on the Nigerian state and foreign shipping companies rather than on the contractors themselves. In the second place we must assume that Abam and his colleagues had finally learned the lesson that the only way to win recognition amongst the dockers was by calling them out on strike. The fact that an organisation that for so many years had been denouncing strikes - an organisation deeply compromised with and dependent on external patrons - was forced to take this action tells us more about the irrelevance of its previous strategy than any commentary can. Lacking any political resource except strike action, and having little to lose by it, dockworkers followed only leaders who were prepared to back up the essential reform demands with effective industrial action. If this process of development (or temporary abberration, for that matter) shows that worker leaders can learn from workers, what are we to make of the reverse development in the case of the traditional radicals?

Despite his communist background and occasional socialist declarations, Odulana's radicalism was of an essentially pragmatic nature. The demands of the ADWT-&GWU(N) differed little, if any, from those of its opponent: it simply adopted an effective strategy for achieving them. This militant strategy was - no doubt - more easily adopted by the leaders because of their communist connections. These both helped isolate them from liberal-paternailst influences (employer, state or union, national or international), and brought them into continual relationship with the mass of dockworkers. The limitations of a militant but (in reality) non-socialist union strategy are revealed by what happened when it was met by concessions. Already in 1971, whilst it was still in the wilderness, it was prepared to collaborate with NPA management and make propaganda for the ICHS amongst its own followers. Given that the NPA and secure employment must have seemed like paradise both to dockworkers and their leaders, this is understandable. But the extent of the later change to ideological developmentalism and nationalism, and to denunciation of strikes, is remarkable. It looks like a complete switch of roles with the

traditional moderates. The switch cannot be completely explained without going into the material of Chapter 11, dealing with the nature of the union's organisation and its relationship with the dockers. In the meantime, we need to emphasise the difference between this attempt at a radical dockworker organisation and those of the early 1960s. Those had been brief attempts, led almost entirely by outsiders, and had foundered on failure. This one had lasted almost 10 years, had been led largely by dockworkers, and was foundering on success.

Footnotes for Chapter 7

1. Except where otherwise indicated, the sources for the following accounts are letters, memoranda and conference reports in the files of W.H.Biney or the BSA. These are comparatively rich for the later 1960s, rather meagre for the early 1970s and little less so for the mid-1970s. Since this is so for both sources, one's impression is that it may reflect an initial peak of union activity, followed by a trough out of which the union had not yet climbed by 1975-6.

2. The sources for the ADU are limited to a conference document, material from the files of the Registrar, and interviews with A.E.Okon and union officers.

3. Sources for this organisation include its own comparatively frequent publications and documents, reports of government inquiries, as well as interviews with its leaders and opponents, Ministry of Labour and NPA officials.

4. Due to their lack of the trade union and industrial training provided to their moderate opponents, and due to the absence of demands from external patrons, the radicals were more lackadaisical in their administration than the ADWT-&GWU(U). Although we have some documents of the organisation itself to draw on, this account is more dependent on interviews, press reports, and on NPA or other official documents.

# Chapter 8
# ANALYSIS: ORGANISING AGAINST THE CONTOURS OF CAPITALISM

We have already summarised the findings concerning the two sectors separately. It is now necessary to compare them, to consider what the specific attitudes and strategies toward capital and state tell us concerning division and unity between portworkers and dockworkers. This will be done by examining the two sectors simultaneously in terms of 1) their similarities, 2) their differences, and 3) the unity/division problem. The chapter will end with some preliminary conclusions. The analysis will draw on the theory in Chapter 5.

## 8.1 The similarities

Firstly, then, the similarities between union strategy in both sectors. These are quite remarkable given the differences between the conditions within them that were initially stressed. We may, perhaps, begin with the reformism that predominated and provided the arena within which the major battles were fought between both port and dockworker unions. Then there is the common crisis of the moderate reformism inspired by the Anglo-Saxon model. This was in both cases accompanied by a radical challenge, with radical reformism coming to predominate. In both cases the radicalisation implied a certain unification at the industry (or, rather, half-industry) level. And in both cases the radical unions showed a growing nationalism and statism.

These common features can, I think, be explained with reference to the general historical development of the international trade union movement, to the general socio-political setting of Nigerian trade unionism, to the specific socio-economic setting of Lagos Port unionism, and to the organisational options open to Nigerian workers at this point of time.

If we place the unions in our industry within the particular period in the history of international labour, we can better understand both the general reformism and the nationalism and statism. Nigerian unionism developed during the second phase mentioned by Olle and Schoeller. In so far as at least the port-

worker unions had had a previous 'political-economic' phase, this had been not as an anti-capitalist and anti-state movement as in 19th century Europe, but as part of a multi-class anti-imperialist movement, dominated by (would-be) capitalists and bureaucrats. Within our period, the unions were faced internationally with two major competing labour movement ideologies and associated union models, the social-democratic and the communist. Both of these were, in their quite different ways, nationalist and statist, and restricted union demands to what I have called the industrial level (because both believed in a division of labour between the 'economic' unions and the 'political' party).

The common features are also evidently a product of the general socio-political setting. This was one of a certain movement at national-level from a liberal-paternalist to a corporatist labour control strategy. On the one hand, increased repression at a time of an oil boom and massive inflation provoked the worker discontent expressed in increased union radicalism. On the other hand, it demanded of union leaders either a greater submissiveness to, or a sharp break with, the dominant ideology. The second option (a radical-democratic ideology and a strategy of mass alliance) was not an imaginable one in Nigeria at this time. The first option was made the only one by 1) the high state legitimacy left over from the nationalist period, 2) the increasing state domination of Nigerian society since independence, and 3) the high value put on state intervention within the international union traditions mentioned above.

The common features can also be in part explained by the specific socio-economic setting within the cargo-handling industry. If we consider the Edwards typology (pp.103-6 above), we would seem to find a rather close fit between the dock labour sector and his simple control/secondary market/working poor type. The NPA, on the other hand, would seem to have no such fit with one type, presenting rather the combination bureaucratic control/subordinate primary market/traditional proletariat. (This latter combination is possibly allowed for by Edwards, when he speaks of the generalisation of bureaucratic control.) Whilst this would still seem to suggest two distinct situations, we must recognise certain qualifications in the Lagos Port case. In the first place, much of the NPA labour force was, in fact, a first-generation proletariat, lived in the same residential areas as the dockworkers, and some 20 percent of it was casually employed. In the second place, the contractor sector situation differs somewhat from the Edwards model in either its 19th century or contemporary versions. Crucially, simple control was being applied to the centrally-placed dock labour force - and in the immediate proximity of the NPA and its workers. The dockworkers could daily see the NPA

model, and their leaders could see and appreciate the model of NPA labour relations. The dockworker unions were, in a sense, struggling to bring about a transition within the industry from simple to bureaucratic control.

The similarities can possibly also be explained by the significant absence during this period of political parties. During the liberal-democratic period in Nigeria (till 1966) there had existed marxist political groups and parties that provided an alternative set of ideals, explanations and strategies to the Western social-democratic ones that otherwise predominated amongst Nigerian labour leaders. The ban on political parties made little difference to the moderates, since reformist ideas continued to be spread through the ILO, the AALC - and even through the Ministry of Labour. But it is at least possible to hypothesise that the instability of dockworker union radicalism was due to the absence of a sustaining marxist party.

## 8.2 The differences

Secondly, the significant differences. These were: the spectrum of union strategies within each sector, the generality of demands, and the implications of the similarities. Whilst moderate or radical reformism provided the main alternatives, we do find a marked clientalism (for which concept see further in Chapter 9) within the contractor sector. And whilst general demands arose alongside small group demands in the NPA, they were permanent and predominant amongst the dockworker unions. Finally, whilst dockworker union demands implied a transformation to the NPA pattern, those of the NPA workers raised potentially more subversive issues.

These differences can again be explained by reference to the socio-economic and socio-political contexts.

The simple control strategy of the contractors allowed for the existence of clientalist unionism. But the same strategy required the workers - if they were to express a minimal collective autonomy to adopt at least a radical reformist alternative. On reflection, indeed, we could see the real alternatives within the contractor sector as excluding the moderate reformist one, thus implying an even greater difference between the strategy spectrum in this and the NPA sector. The nature of the model clientalist union, however, is made even clearer when one recalls that the growth of scale within such companies implies the growth of a hierarchy of supervisors with an interest possibly distinct from that of both the boss and the workers. Biney's clientalist union had as its base rather these supervisors than the workers. And even the more-independent union at Akere's was headman dominated. The contrast between

the generality of dockworker union demands (also amongst the moderates) and the particularity of portworker union ones (also amongst the radicals) is again partially explicable by reference to control strategy. Any successful challenge to a simple control strategy requires a combination of workers across the separate, competing companies within the limits of which the strategy operates. Such a challenge was, of course, facilitated in the contractor sector by the state's imposition of homogeneity (not a feature of the Edwards model, past or present). On the other hand, the principle behind bureaucratic control is both the heterogenisation of labour and the incorporation of unions. The function of unions within this model is to handle the individualised complaints of tens or hundreds of special interest groups. Even when Adebola was making a general attack on NPA management's corruption, authoritarianism and inefficiency, his union continued to concentrate on grades and trades demands.

Differentiation is also explicable in part by the national socio-political context. One national labour-control strategy obviously has different implications for workers in different market situations. Both the liberal-paternalist and the corporatist patterns assume the existence of unions that can represent/ control the workers. These existed within NPA, and the NPA unions were therefore faced not simply with state repression but also state mediation. Even when repression increased, it did not significantly affect portworker unions. On the other hand, dockworker attempts to unionise in the face of contractor opposition had been faced with the mailed fist of state even during the liberal-paternalist period. Repression increased with the shift to corporatism, at a time when the state's interest in the velvet glove of free collective bargaining was declining. Odulana was (at least while unrecognised) more or less forced to confront and challenge the state head on.

Insofar as we have spoken of a similarity of port and dockworker union radicalism, we still have to recognise the different implications each had. Whilst that of the dockworker unions appears more significant -in challenging the ownership pattern within the contractor sector - what it implied was incorporation into the 'traditional proletariat'. And whilst portworker union radicalism would seem to have been limited by its continued acceptance of management (as distinguished, again, from managers or mangements), can we not see here the beginning of those quality and control demands so subversive of domination by capital and state?

## 8.3 The unity/division problem

It is time to return to the question of division and

unity between port and dock workers. Moderate reformism lacks the concept of a single common working-class interest and therefore lacks the motivation for class unification. Indeed, it could be argued that it is premised precisely on interest divisions amongst workers and is threatened by unity. Thus we find multiple and continuing cleavages amongst the moderate reformists in both halves of the cargo-handling industry. Radicalisation and unification went together - but only within each half industry. The ADWT&GWU(N) request to join the NMTUF is significant both as indicating the greater interest of radical dockworker unions in cross-industry unity, and as the only such expression of such an interest. This was both the extent and the limits of union awareness of the value of industrial unity. The common participation of unions in the Adebo and Udoji movements had few if any implications organisationally, because the activity was (as we will later see) serialised and consecutive rather than coordinated and simultaneous. When the state legislated for single, united but separate unions for NPA and dockworkers, there was no complaint from any unionist within the industry. The persistence of division would seem to be adequately explicable in terms of what has already been said. Yet we may consider further the nature of the union as a type of working-class organisation. Exploitation within the wage-labour relationship provides the initial stimulus to combination and collective action - but does not unionism organise workers 'according to the contours imposed on them by the capitalist system'? Certainly it would seem to permit this, as the rich evidence of fraction, segment and stratum organisation in the industry suggests. Whether it requires that is a question we may need to return to. Certainly during our period one is rather aware of the unions overcoming such divisions.

One final - if tentative - thought arises at this point: are the more-proletarianised workers more radical than the less so? This is what both I and others have previously asserted. But here, on the basis of organisational strategy, I have been only able to suggest the possibly radical implications of portworker demands. And any such implication is surely seriously qualified insofar as it is limited to the one corporation, or the one working-class fraction. If we add this qualification of portworker union radicalism to that of dockworker union radicalism, then we will, I think, begin to recognise that there is no 'real' working class in existence, which either 'labour aristocrats' or 'semi-proletarianised peasants' must join. Nor is there a vanguard segment, fraction or stratum which the others must follow. Should not the creation of a working class and the development of a working-class movement rather be seen precisely as the struggle to overcome such divisions of labour?

## PART III

## INTERNAL RELATIONS: UNION STRUCTURES, AFFILIATIONS, LEADERS AND FOLLOWERS

Chapter 9: Theoretical introduction: unions, leaders and followers

Chapter 10: Portworker unionists: invisible enemies and absent friends

Chapter 11: Dockworker unionists: those who were being paid could not face the workers

Chapter 12: Analysis: capital and state are also within the unions

# Chapter 9
# THEORETICAL INTRODUCTION:UNIONS, WORKERS AND LEADERS

Part III deals with the 'internal relations' of the unions within the Lagos cargo-handling industry. By 'internal relations' is here meant those running across, up and down from the union leaderships. The first will be considered when we look at the structure and functioning of the unions.[1] The second will be covered when we examine the relations of union leaders with national and international union organisations. The third will be dealt with when we go into more detail on union leaders and compare them with their followers.

In order to handle this material we will need some more theory. The rest of this chapter will therefore set out a conceptualisation of 1) consciousness amongst workers, 2) union structure and function, and 3) types of labour leadership.

## 9.1 Consciousness amongst workers

If we are to deal with class consciousness, we will need to deal with class structure and social stratification first. So far we have only dealt with intra-class structures (in terms of fractions, segments and strata) and then only in passing. We have been assuming the existence of a working class. Now we have to make the assumptions explicit. The subordinate cooperation of the workers with the capitalists is the basis of capitalist existence and development; it is working-class rejection of this that undermines it. This must be considered in terms of a process by which capital continually attempts to bring productive resources under its control, thus incorporating means of subsistence outside the wage sector, and reducing such autonomy as workers (e.g. skilled artisans, out-workers) might have over the labour process (Braverman 1974). It is the existence of access to other means of subsistence and of a certain control over the labour process (or the memory of these) that fires early working-class protest (see Thompson 1963).

Although the capitalist class is the dominant one, the working class is not the only subordinate one. The

importance of an understanding of the other subordinate classes within the context of this work is not only due to their weight relative to that of the industrial proletariat in a peripheral capitalist society. It is also required by the focus of this work on a service industry (where, as Braverman (1974:Ch.16) shows, the capitalist labour process is traditionally less developed), and on the state sector. An understanding of the position of such other classes and categories relative to the working class, finally, helps us to understand the economic, political and ideological status of the working class relationally.

There is, firstly a rural and/or urban petty-bourgeoisie of peasants, craftspeople and traders. The petty-bourgeois is a controller or owner of means of production who combines these with his own labour power. The petty-bourgeoisie is in origin a pre-capitalist class, but one continually transformed by the needs of capitalism for a series of low-profitability goods and services. Its subordination is due to its exploitation through the process of exchange, the terms of which are determined by capital. Combining characteristics of the capitalist and the worker, the petty-bourgeoisie is in a contradictory relationship with each. But although the petty-bourgeoisie may come into political conflict with either, this conflict is not one which can overcome its subordination, far less lead to a society dominated by petty-property owners. Its struggles can only contribute to those of one (or both!) of the fundamental classes.

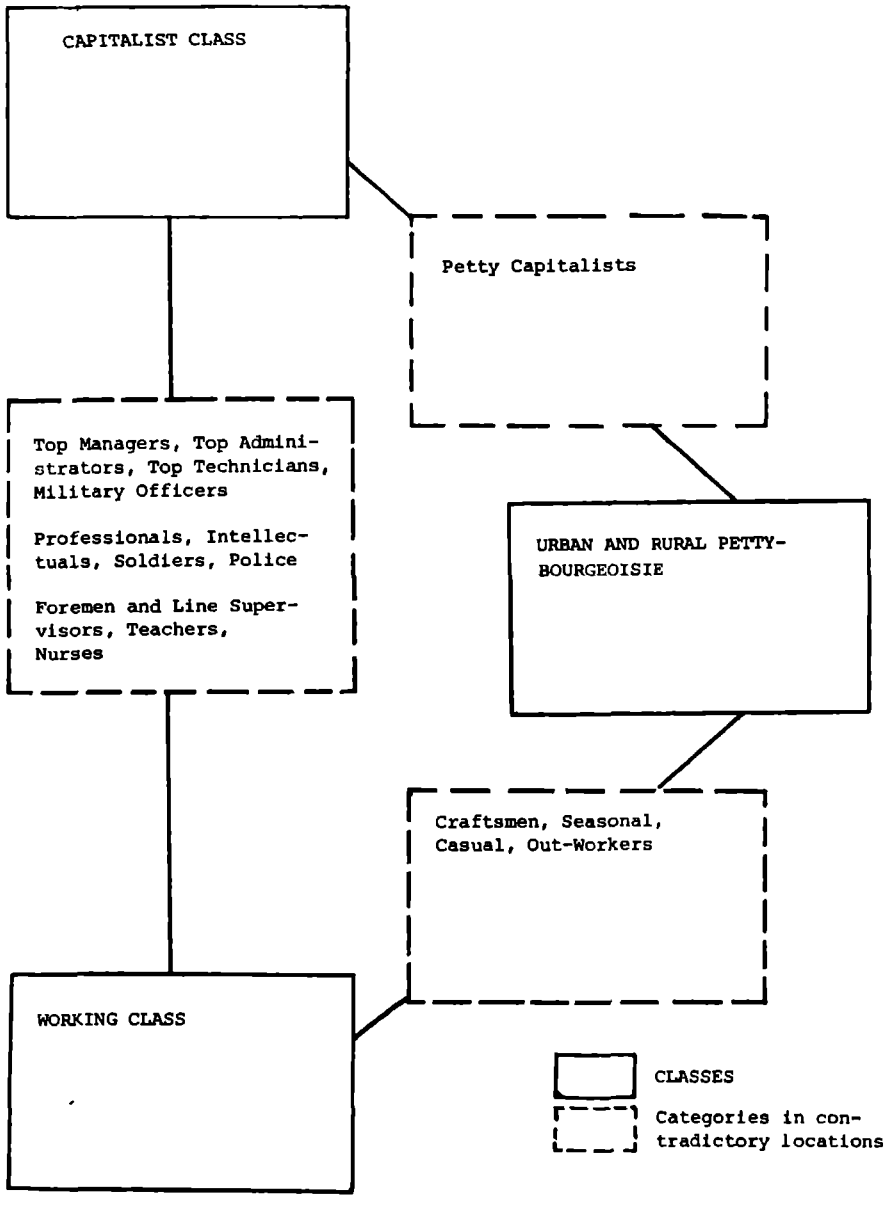
The other significant non-fundamental grouping consists of categories that sell their labour power but are not directly involved in the production (including transportation and preservation) of commodities (Post 1978:82): managers and overseers; technical experts; surplus-realising workers (clerks, bookkeepers, shop assistants); personal-service workers; and those engaged in the ideological-political-legal institutions (administrators, teachers, soldiers, judges, priests) necessary for the general reproduction of the capitalist order. I will follow Wright in conceptualising these as categories occupying contradictory locations between the capitalist class, working class and petty-bourgeoisie. Such a conceptualisation permits us to also place small capitalists and the 'upper' working class. Figure 9.1 is adapted from Wright (1976:37) and shows this diagramatically.[2]

The criteria used are the three components of capitalist power; those of control over 1) investments/accumulation, 2) means of production, and 3) the labour power of others. The capitalist has full control over all three, the worker over none, the petty-bourgeois over the first two but not the third. The contradictory locations are to be understood in terms of the develop-

ment of capitalism. In the first place this implies the undermining of the petty-commodity mode (petty-bourgeoisie), allowing a few to rise in the direction of the capitalist class, whilst successively reducing the autonomy of others and thrusting them toward the working class. In the second place, it implies the creation of a hierarchy and differentiation of control between the foreman (closest to the working class) and the top manager (closest to the capitalist class). The development of capitalism has successively removed control from the bottom and concentrated it at the top. We may consider the two processes in relation to the working class. Whereas at one time the clerk, accountant, engineer and manager stood (often literally) next to the capitalist, the growth of scale, division of labour and mechanisation has successively 'proletarianised' them. Whereas at one time the doctor, lawyer, architect, technician - or even manual artisan - had control over one or more of the three elements, capitalist industrialisation has been successively reducing their autonomy. It is evident that analysis of direct relationship to the mode of production is necessary but not sufficient for class analysis. Wright suggests that political and ideological relations have increased weight in determining the class positions of the intermediate categories. Thus, the ideological division between 'mental' and 'manual' has been crucial in concealing their decreasing power and privilege from clerks. Employment within the state apparatus (the role of which is precisely the general reproduction of capitalist society) may likewise conceal their proletarian position from public sector workers.

How does this conceptualisation of the classes and categories surrounding the working class relate to our previous conceptualisation of its internal structure? What we have previously presented as a higher stratum of the working class is here presented as a low intermediary category between the working and capitalist classes (junior supervisors). And what we have previously considered as a fraction of the working class is here presented as a category intermediate between the working class and the petty-bourgeoisie (casual labourers). I see no necessary contradiction here. In the earlier approach we were looking at the internal relations of the working class, and here we are considering its external relations. In both cases we are concerned precisely with understanding the working class relationally and as a process. In both cases there is revealed the heterogeneity of labour under capitalism. In both cases the problem remains of the struggle to overcome such divisions of labour. In terms of internal relations we could speak of the problem of working class <u>consolidation</u>, in the second case of its <u>expansion</u>. This leaves us with the necessary task of <u>conceiving</u> segmentation of the working class in terms of its external relations.

Figure 9.1 Major classes and intermediate categories in a capitalist social formation



I earlier defined segmentation negatively and generally as referring to 'non-economic' divisions within classes, such as by region, religion, ethnicity, age group. To characterise these as 'non-economic' does not mean that they have no economic implications, but that they are inexplicable in terms of the relations of production alone. Segmentation within capitalist society has its roots either in pre-class social divisions (by kinship, age, sex), or in pre-capitalist societies (caste, religion, ethnic group, language, etc.), or in the conditions necessary for the general reproduction of capitalist society as a whole (religion again, party, nation-state). It is evident that despite its claims to be universalistic, capitalism does not wipe out or even reduce such segmentation. Rather does it use and adapt it for the general aim of capital and power concentration and expansion. What capitalism tends to do is to turn every previously existing difference into a hierarchical one, and then to universalise such differences: advanced and backward regions; men and women; whites and blacks; north and south; christian and pagan; etc. Whilst capitalism systematically denies and obscures its fundamental class relationship, it recognises, admits and 'condemns' (at least in its liberal form) discrimination based on race, sex, nation, age, religion, etc. Since these cleavages are commonly highly visible, traditional or institutionalised, it is common for exploited classes to experience and express their feelings of discontent in these rather than in universal class forms. We will have to return to this when dealing with consciousness directly.

We have so far been generalising about capitalist social formations. Now we need to allow for the specific features of the peripheral capitalist society. Here a tiny and weak capitalist class is in most cases still in process of consolidation from pre-capitalist landed classes, or from categories that were intermediary between imperial capital, the colonial state and the local masses. It is still less evidently a crystallised class than a series of capitalist fractions (agricultural, financial, commercial, industrial), usually dominated by the commercial one. Its development is largely limited by the domination of a metropolitan capitalist segment, and sometimes by the presence of other foreign capitalists (Chinese in South-East Asia, Levantines in West Africa, Indians in East Africa).

A capital-intensive, narrow and export-oriented industrialisation implies a slow and sometimes negative growth of the working class relative to that of the petty bourgeoisie. This working class customarily lacks a solid industrial base. Its fractioning by activity (significantly, agricultural, commercial, industrial) is compounded by its division according to ownership sector (significantly, multinational, state, local capitalist).

The formations are dominated by a massive rural and urban petty-bourgeoisie, a greater or lesser part of which is partially proletarianised (as seasonal, casual and sub-contracted semi-independent wage labour). The categories intermediate between the working and capitalist class are large in relation to these (when compared with either classical or contemporary industrial capitalist societies). This is mostly due to the necessity of a large state sector - both to provide the essential public services and apparatus of coercion, and to substitute for the 'missing' capitalists.

In moving from class structure to class consciousness we may first see how Meszaros (1971:109-110) sets out the general process of social reproduction under capitalism and the modes of consciousness this gives rise to. This he does not only for the working class but also for the subordinated categories that lie between the capitalist and the working class. These are of importance because of their intermediacy, because they are immediately above or around the working class and because - in a peripheral capitalist society - of their combined numerical weight relative to the working class. Generalising about these peripheral groups, Meszaros argues that whilst their peripheralisation allows them to develop a critical attitude toward capitalism, it also

> necessarily condemns them to an impotence graphically expressed in the self-fulfilling character of their ideologies (from some later representatives of the enlightenment to anarchism, and from the manifold varieties of 'populism' to the countless forms of utopianism).

They are incapable of formulating an autonomous class ideology. They are condemned to ideological support for the ruling class, to impotence, or to identification with the working class.

With respect to the working class Meszaros first deals with the crucial distinction between contingent and necessary consciousness. Proletarian consciousness is

> the worker's consciousness of his social being as embedded in the necessary structural antagonism of capitalist society, in contrast to the contingency of group consciousness which perceives only a more or less limited part of the global confrontation (Meszaros 1971:101).

'Proletarian consciousness', it is suggested, is not a spontaneous and immediate product of the proletarian situation. Whereas the individual self-interest of

members of the dominant class is directly related to its general interest, that of the subordinate groups is not so. To understand the gap that exists between contingent (empirically observable) and necessary (corresponding to structure and interest) consciousness amongst workers, we can consider the process indicated by Meszaros. 'Individual self-interest', 'status consciousness' and 'class consciousness' can be considered either as aspects of worker consciousness at a particular point in time, or as 'breadths' of worker consciousness over time. Amongst any group of workers at almost any place or time it is possible to identify individual interest, segment, stratum or fraction interest and class interest. If this is not recognised, it is easy to misunderstand worker attitudes or ideologies amongst a particular group, within a particular country, or at a particular period.

Let us consider again the matter of breadths of consciousness amongst workers. Many observers have recognised the necessity of going further than Lenin in distinguishing between the 'trade union' and 'socialist' levels of worker consciousness. Worker individualism is openly recognised by labour organisers. It is understood by socialists less as a product of the competition of worker against worker than as a 'petty-bourgeois' trait. This is because of the traditional marxist stress on the socialising and solidarity-creating effect of the wage-labour relationship. The capitalist division of labour can, however, stimulate the creation of the partial group with its status consciousness. This may be consciousness of stratum interest (white-collar/blue-collar, skilled/semi-skilled/unskilled) of segment interest (religious, ethnic, national, sexual) or of fraction interest (departmental, enterprise, ownership sector, industrial sector, etc.). Finally, there is class interest, which at its broadest implies:

> recognition of the objective socio-historical prevalence of the strategic world perspectives of the working class in both its negative and positive aspects: i.e. both as a radical negation of the capitalist world system and as a positive organisational principle of production based on a structural emancipation of labour (Meszaros 1977:117).

It is, indeed, on the occasions that national segments of this international class demonstrate their internationalism that one can best judge its potential for remaking a world divided into hostile nations and blocs by international capitalism.

There are in the Meszaros presentation - or my gloss on it - two dangers. The first is of an economic determination of consciousness, of reducing ideology to

the classes created by capitalism. The second is of legislating for 'necessary working-class consciousness' from outside and above the working class - and before the event. Indeed, the two errors are linked and mutually-sustaining. For if the empirical worker is frequently or commonly dominated by individual or status consciousness, he is evidently going to need the (presumably non-petty-bourgeois) marxist intellectual or politician to tell him what his necessary consciousness should be. The major anti-capitalist revolutions so far have seen the spreading of basic marxist precepts amongst labouring people, but the preservation of theory and ideology production in the hands of specialised marxist theorists and professional organisers. The movement from a narrower to a broader working-class consciousness, therefore, must be understood as having additional requirements. The first is the breaking down of the division of labour between theoreticians, activists and members within the labour movement. The second is that we recognise the intimate linkage between working-class consciousness and working-class capacity-to-control. Growing class consciousness will then be indicated not by ideology-switching (e.g. from catholicism to communism) but by increasing understanding and control of social processes (as demonstrated in 1980-81 by catholic Polish workers). Having made these qualifications and specifications concerning class consciousness, we may turn to the question of non-class structures and consciousness.

Laclau (1977:Ch.4) and Laclau and Mouffe (1981) point out that since not all social contradictions can be reduced to the worker-capitalist one, there are other potentially revolutionary subjects than the worker. The contradictions between women, students, regional and racial minorities, on the one hand, and capital and state on the other, are not due to the wage-labour relationship but to the general social organisation of capitalist society - that it is sexist, racist, centralist, etc. The relationship between such identities and class ones is evidently vital in developing a working-class strategy with a general appeal to the exploited and oppressed. Of the non-class identities the one of most interest to us is the ethnic.

In a useful discussion of writings on class and ethnicity, John Saul (1979) reminds us of the extent to which the relationship between industrialised capitalist core and periphery implies a heightened relevance on non-class social structures and identities for and within the periphery.[3] The imposition of capitalist relations by conquest increases the importance of the nation state and of nationalism. In so far as the conquered societies were pre-capitalist, they were also ones in which the 'superstructures' of kinship, religion, etc, entered into the constitution of the mode of production to a greater degree than under

capitalism. Finally, the manner in which capitalism both undermines and preserves (for its own purposes) pre-capitalist modes serves 'to animate and politicise ethnicity' (Saul 1979:360). Saul draws on Laclau to make the point that the question is precisely how ethnic identity is articulated with (i.e. joined with) class identity, ethnic struggle with class struggle. The ethnic consciousness and struggles of labouring people can be articulated with the interests of the bourgeoisie. But

> there are 'bottom-up' as well as 'top-down' explanations for the peasantry and proletariat/semi-proletariat constituting themselves as ethnic subjects. We should not be surprised at this. Nor should we assume that this is invariably at odds with the development of class consciousness. (Saul 1979:365).

Referring to the particular African experience of imperial rule and foreign capitalist exploitation, Saul even argues that the 'class consciousness of the peasant and proletariat as it emerges will almost inevitably' express itself in ethnic terms.[4] Saul recognises the problems that such ethnic identification creates for revolutionary socialists, who are future-oriented and universalistic. Even if ethnic politics does raise more general class or democratic issues, it does tend to lay major stress on the preservation of traditional behaviour patterns, language, religion, etc. And it does require that one belongs - usually by birth - to the group in question. The implications of this for the internal politics of the unions will be considered shortly.

## 9.2. Union structure and function

In considering union structure and function, we may turn again to Hyman (1975). Hyman points out that every attempt by workers to institutionalise their power is met by capitalist and state efforts to use the very organisations and achievements against the workers. Thus we get the widely recognised and much discussed cleavage between the union as an organisation and its members. Such a cleavage must be understood not as due to 'institutional needs' but to particular social structures and historical processes. Firstly, there is the matter of union base or constituency. The earliest unions were 'closed' ones, based on a pre-existing craft or industrial community, created from below, and therefore willing and able to exercise 'primitive democracy'. This meant decision by general meeting, minimal delegation, volunteer officers, regular rotation. Whilst the development of the later general unions 'open' to all skill levels and/or industries was a result of mass upsurge, the creation of organisations on such varied constituencies required

action from above by professional organisers. Government of such unions is commonly by 'popular bossdom':

> the power of the key leaders within the formal machinery of union decision-making is firmly entrenched, and this dominance they seek to legitimise by cultivating the personal identification and loyalty of the members. ..Mechanisms of upwards control are limited in significance. (Hyman 1975:72).

Hyman also encourages scepticism toward the notion that the creation of industrial unions is necessarily a working-class victory. Whilst they have been fought for by socialists who saw this as a basis for working-class unity and workers' control of industry, they have also been favoured by the managerialy inclined. These see in industrial unionism an end to competitive militancy by unions and a possibility for increased union discipline over workers.

A second source of cleavage is, of course, the professionalisation of union leadership as such:

> The trade unionist who becomes a full-time official enters a new world. His job revolves around an office and a briefcase: in most cases a total contrast with the old tools of his trade. His circle of social relations, both within work and outside, often alters radically; his style and standard of living tend to reflect what he has become - a man with a career. The attractions should not be exaggerated: the hours of work are often long, the pressures considerable, the pay (for junior officials at least) rarely much above the earnings of the higher-paid sections of the membership. What the job does bring, however, is a position of influence, a wide area of autonomy, a sense of meaning and importance, a status in the community, which few trade unionists can expect from their ordinary employment. (Hyman 1975: 78).

Along with such incentives to retain office goes the ability to influence the electoral process within the unions:

> A necessary part of the leadership position centres around the development of political skills and experience: how to make speeches, handle meetings, cultivate contacts, perform favours which attract repayment...Hence the defeat of sitting officials is comparatively rare.(79).

The stress on 'political' and its definition in terms

of 'handling' meetings, 'cultivating' contacts, performing 'favours' suggests (although this is not necessarily Hyman's intent) that politics is here being understood as bourgeois politicking rather than a higher level of working-class consciousness and action.

A third source of membership/leadership cleavage is the transformation of union function consequent upon their recognition and legalisation by capital and state. Amongst the early aims of the unions have been:

> the reconstruction of the social order; the abolition of the dominating role of profit; the establishment of workers' control of industry; the reorganisation of the economy to serve directly the needs of the producers and the general members of the society; the humanisation of work; the elimination of gross inequalities in standards of living and conditions of life; the transformation of cultural richness from the privilege of a minority to the property of all. (Hyman 1975:87).

But concession, recognition, legalisation, and the incorporation of union leaders into the institutions of management and government mutes the radicalism provoked by their former illegal or unrecognised status. The reduction of unions to a role functional to the ends of exploiting and oppressing minorities, we might add, does not only occur under liberalising capitalist regimes, but also under communist ones. And the brief experience of unionism in Poland reminds us that the reduction of unions to the role of representation/discipline within an accepted social and political structure is not a one-way evolutionary trend. If, within Poland, we could briefly see unions moving away from their 'productionist' role, there is within liberal capitalist societies no clear or general trend away from their 'consumptionist' one. Given the existence of liberal legislation, the union official

> experiences a natural commitment to the existing bargaining arrangements and the terms of existing collective agreements. This commitment, moreover, is attributable less to any personal characteristics of the official than to his function...Yet if the union official sees orderly industrial relations as essential for stable bargaining relationships with employers and ultimately for union security, his viewpoint in many respects parallels that of management. (Hyman 1975:91. Stress in original).

And if the union's function is understood as negotiating and administering wages and conditions with

employers, then there is no need for membership participation and activity:

> The reasonable member, in turn, will view his union as no more than a fairly narrow service agency; so long as it delivers the goods he has no cause to worry about its internal government. It would be as pointless to tell his full-time official how he should go about his job as it would be to tell his greengrocer.(85)

Given these three mutually-reinforcing forces for the conversion of union organisations into mediators between capital/state and the working class, what are the countervailing tendencies? For Hyman, drawing on the experience of industrialised liberal-democratic societies, the total incorporation of unions is inconceivable. Under corporatist or communist societies it is, of course, both conceivable and historically demonstrable for long periods of time. The only significant limitation on this process - in all three socio-political situations - is the activity of the members themselves. Although Hyman stresses this direct expression of worker interests (a matter to which we will return in more detail in Part IV), he also allows for the manner in which this can express itself through lower-level elected or paid officers, and through union factionalism (80-81).

Although racial, religious and linguistic factionalism is far from unknown in the labour movements of industrialised capitalist countries (consider, respectively, the US, Northern Ireland, Belgium), it is clear from what has been said earlier about ethnic segmentation within the working class that it will be more marked at the capitalist periphery. There is a clear relationship between ethnicity, clientage politics and union factionalism. But before we examine this relationship, we must briefly consider the issue of patron-client relations in popular movements.

First, a definition:

> Patronage...is a structural principle which underlies asymmetric personal transactions involving protection and loyalty between two persons...In the transactions between a patron and client, the former can be clearly distinguished from the latter: it is the patron who determines when and who defines what is going to be exchanged. In a word, the transaction is initiated and 'directed' by the patron...The same actor may perform both roles, each in a different context, vis-a-vis different or the same people. (Blok 1969: 365-6).

Although Blok suggests that the concept of patronage is merely an analytical construct (which can be applied also to the father-son, saint-devotee, landlord-tenant, politician-voter relations), he himself identifies the historical roots and changing historical forms of patronage. He offers an evolutionary schema, with types of patronage (vassalage, brokerage, friendship, disguised patronage) distinguished according to successive state types. There is a danger of such a construct being overgeneralised (so as to illegitimse other inequality or leadership theories) or of the evolutionary schema becoming a philosophy of history (suggesting universality and inevitability). This is revealed in Galjart's (1964,1969) writings on social movements in Latin America. Galjart (1965) offers 'following' as both a necessary and a sufficient concept for the analysis of the dramatic peasant movements in Brazil in the 1950s and early 1960s. He also presents leader-member relations amongst urban workers in this manner (1969:405-9). Huizer (1965) criticises some of Galjart's evidence and interpretations, and also shows how the body of his material can be interpreted in classical marxist terms. This is not, in turn, to deny the value of patronage analysis but to limit and specify its use:

> Both approaches, the one Galjart criticised and the one he used, are attractive because of their simplicity, but their value for future planning and experimenting is limited. Galjart stressed too much the static aspects of Brazilian rural life, while those he tried to combat possibly overstressed the dynamic, the 'historical-dialectical' aspects, without taking into account enough the particular situation in each different region. (Huizer 1965:141).

Huizer and Wertheim (1969) would not, therefore, deny the existence of patronage relations within liberal-democratic societies, nor within revolutionary movements, but rather stress the increasingly representative and rational character of new mass organisations, even where they retain clientage elements. It would seem to me, however, that the existence or reappearance of patronage relations within liberal-democratic polities, within revolutionary social movements and in post-capitalist societies requires further consideration. We cannot assume that there is an evolutionary process occurring in which patronage relations are being driven out by increased democracy and rationality - only that there are new contradictions between the old norms and institutions and the new ones. Insofar as we can identify patronage relations within the new polity, movement or society, we have reason to question their democratic, revolutionary or socialist claims. Since the market and liberal democracy are

universalistic only in the claim (in practice reproducing economic inequality and power differentiation), they cannot but reproduce patronage relations - if on the greater scale of competing parliamentary parties. But the persistence or reappearance of patronage relations cannot be explained by patronage analysis. Nor can patronage analysis by itself assist in the surpassing of patronage relations. It is in this sense that it is not only static but conservative. One thus needs a theory that can explain the historical and social origins of 'asymmetric personal transactions involving protection and loyalty', as well as the moments in which these are challenged and the conditions for their surpassing. This, of course, would be the claim of marxism. But, then, this would be a marxism that did not so much deny the value of patronage analysis as situate it in relation to class analysis. Recognition of the re-appearance of patronage relations in - for example - post-revolutionary Russia, would then require analysis of the nature of the revolutionary classes, movements and leaderships. As the work of the historian Marc Ferro (1980) suggests, the reproduction of patronage (and other capitalist and precapitalist) relations was due to the underdevelopment of a homogenous social force with universalistic (i.e. socialist) desires and capacities.

The working class is claimed by marxists to be such a force - which may be why Hobsbawm (1974) objects to having its organisations analysed in terms of patron-client relations. Yet it is precisely in such terms that Richard Sandbrook (1975) has analysed Kenyan unions.[5] And he presents a convincing argument on the relationship between clientage politics, ethnicity and union factionalism. He shows that whilst ethnic identity amongst workers is not inevitably an obstacle to class consciousness, it evidently provides a basis for creating vertical loyalties of workers or union members with rich and powerful ethnic brothers. Patron-client relations in Kenya are shown as extending from the 'big man' at the centre down to the peasant at the periphery, cutting across geographical, organisational and occupational boundaries. Although permitting some benefits to trickle down,

> Clientelism, emphasising vertical, personal linkages, impedes the development of consciousness of common interests on the part of the underlying strata...To the extent that clientelism...promotes intra-class rather than inter-class conflict, it is a support of the inegalitarian status quo. (Sandbrook 1975:21).

Although clientelism clearly has rural roots, Sandbrook makes clear how this was practised by the colonial authorities (who, one might add, also stimulated -

where they did not create - tribalism), and how it serves the post-colonial order.

Factions are defined as structurally identical groupings, and Sandbrook shows that when the political process is pervaded with clientage relations, the main form of conflict is factionalism. Since such factions are basically concerned with power, they rarely have a distinct political or ideological orientation. The patron reinforces stability by appeals to friendship, kinship or ethnicity. What are the implications of this general political pattern for trade unionism? Union leadership offers material benefits, prestige, the possibility of promotion within industry, a stepping stone to political office. Particularly where the check-off (employer deduction of union fees from wages) exists will leaders have the opportunity to create patronage networks, offering union positions, scholarships and other benefits in exchange for personal loyalty. Whilst competition between structurally identical patron-client factions would seem to vitiate membership control of unions, Sandbrook argues otherwise. He suggests that leaderships are caught in a series of contradictions between capital and state on the one hand and the working class on the other. These tensions fuel intra-union conflicts. These conflicts are expressed in faction fighting, and the consequent rise and fall of factions provides an obstacle to the existence of self-continuing, conservative and authoritarian leaders. Here we must qualify by recognising that whilst factionalism may be a threat to a particular leader, it is no threat to opportunist, careerist, elitist and manipulative leadership. Clientage relations and factional politics would seem to be precisely the means of articulating the ethnic identity of workers with the social interests of those exploiting and oppressing them.

## 9.3. Types of labour leadership

Lastly, we have to deal with types of labour leader. We have already dealt with leadership ideology or strategy. What we are here concerned with is the social position, style and persona of leaders. Evidently the two are related, but the present focus can tell us more about the nature of leadership and leader-member relations than the adopted (or borrowed, adapted, abandoned) ideologies.[6]

An attempt at a typology of popular leadership in a PCS has been made by Post (1978:182-6) in his study of a labour rebellion in Jamaica in the 1930s. He identifies 1) the exemplary leader who demonstrates personally to followers an alternative way of life, 2) the charismatic leader, claiming to possess or be an expression of supernatural powers, 3) the trickster, claiming or demonstrating the capacity to deceive the

rich and powerful, 4) the status leader, a person demonstrating the technical skills and capacities necessary to bargain with capital and state, and 5) the reformist or revolutionary educator (Post actually refers here to the position of intellectual, rather than the appeal). Although not necessarily set out as such, this is implicitly an evolutionary typology insofar as the first types appeared earlier and were rooted in the rural or urban petty-commodity culture, the later ones in a more urban and wage-earning one. It is also a normative typology insofar as Post sees the revolutionary intellectual as the bearer of socialism. We should further note that (with the adjustment I have made above) this is a typology of style or appeal rather than one of social position. And, finally, we must recognise that it is a typology of popular rather than worker leadership, from the beginning of unionism in Jamaica.

Having set out some of the concepts necessary for the analysis of relations within unions, let us turn again to the case study.

NOTES

1. Customarily one would here be dealing with the traditional problem of union democracy. I did not have the time or the opportunity to observe more than one or two union meetings, and one can get little or no idea from documents of how the unions are governed. For the best Nigerian study of this problem, consult Smock (1969). For a marxist approach to the problem, see Hyman (1975:Ch.3).

2. Wright's analysis is concerned with modes of production rather than social formations. He is therefore not required to 'place' state personnel in his diagram, although he does make references to them in his text. Moreover, he places between capitalists and workers only those with intermediate places in the authority structure, not those with the specialised technical/scientific functions required by capitalist industrialisation. He therefore places professionals, teachers, technicians (overwhelmingly sellers of labour power historically) with skilled artisans (historically sellers of commodities) between the working class and the petty bourgeoisie. It would seem to me more appropriate (even on his own criteria) to place the state personnel, technical and scientific experts between capitalist class and proletariat, and add to the skilled artisan such significant intermediate groups as seasonal, casual and outworkers. There is a further problem with Wright's terminology, that he himself recognises. It is somewhat confusing to talk about categories

in 'contradictory locations' between classes that are themselves in contradiction. However, I consider it preferable to employ his terminology rather than propose an alternative.

3. Since Saul's article is largely a survey of a range of literature, one should not assume that my references to it here are necessarily his views of the matter. For a critical discussion of Saul's paper see LARU Studies (1980).

4. Not only at the periphery, and not only in ethnic terms. John Leggett's classic study of Detroit shows the extent to which class and ethnic consciousness are inter-related at the very centre of world capitalist industry (Leggett 1968). And much of Paul Lubeck's work on Kano has been concerned with the articulation there of class and islamic consciousness and organisation amongst workers (Lubeck 1973, 1975a, 1975b, 1979, 1981).

5. What follows is in large part drawn from a review of Sandbrook's book (Waterman 1977).

6. See the fascinating account of the leadership of the Light and Power Workers Union in Cordoba, Argentina, by Marta Roldan (1978). This shows how a formerly Peronist (radical-democratic) leadership was gradually shifted in a socialist-revolutionary direction by its experience of increased repression and exploitation in the 1960s. The ideological radicalisation of the leadership, however, took place without an accompanying democratisation of its traditional personalist leadership style. With the return of a Peronist regime in 1973, the leaders found themselves increasingly isolated from their followers, to the point at which the members took no action when their leadership was repressed.

# Chapter 10
# PORTWORKER UNIONISTS: INVISIBLE ENEMIES AND ABSENT FRIENDS

In this chapter we will be dealing with the internal relations of trade unions in a long- and well-established industry. We will deal in turn with the formal qualities of the organisations, with the factionalism that plagued them, and with their relations to the national and international trade union movement. Following this we will examine more closely the nature of union leadership and compare the attitudes of leaders and followers. We will become aware of the problems of unions that reduce themselves to representative/bargaining bodies, thus demobilising their members. It will be suggested that ethnic factionalism was the last weapon left to ineffective leaderships as their type of unionism failed to meet their followers' needs.

## 10.1. Union structure

As long ago as 1963, 8,000 of NPA's national junior staff force of 9,875 were said to have signed check-off forms for one union or another (NPA Report 1963:71). This suggests a unionisation rate of over 80 percent. Ten years later, Table 6.1 shows there to have been a total junior staff union membership (i.e. excluding the NPAOA) of 10,923, at a time when total junior staff in NPA was 14,211 (NPA Report 1973:84). This suggests a unionisation rate of some 76 percent. Given the quality of NPA statistics, we cannot assume a fall in unionisation between the two periods. But even the lower rate suggests a solidly-unionised industry. Table 6.1 also shows the distribution between unions in NPA nationally in 1973. This shows the R&PT&CSU of Adebola to have controlled over 40 percent of the unionised workers, the NPAWU of Nwankwonta some 35 percent, the NMWU of Zudonu some 16 percent, with the other unions or associations having each two percent or less. Although we do not have unionisation rates for Lagos, we do have membership distribution figures for Lagos Port Complex and Headquarters. The data are presented in Table 10.1. these show the R&PTCSU to have been in a dominating position, with two-thirds of the total membership. The NPAWU and NMWU together, with almost equal numbers, did not make up the other third. The MESAN and FGT&GWU, again with almost equal figures,

Table 10.1. Union Strength at Lagos Port Complex, August 1977

| Name | Strength | % | Income (in N) | & | Income per member (in N) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| NPAWU | 919 | (15.2) | 575 | (10.2) | 0.6 |
| R&PT&CSU | 3,959 | (65.8) | 3,898 | (69.2) | 0.9 |
| NMWU | 968 | (16.0) | 1,024 | (18.1) | 1.0 |
| MESAN | 82 | ( 1.3) | 92 | ( 1.6) | 1.1 |
| FGT&GWU | 85 | ( 1.4) | 41 | ( 0.7) | 0.4 |
| TOTAL | 6,013 | (99.7) | 5,630 | (99.8) | 0.9 |

Source: NPA Union Strength 1977.
Notes: These organisations were the registered junior staff unions with check-off facilities in mid-1977.

accounted for less than three percent between them. Bearing in mind that total junior staff in Lagos Port Complex and Headquarters at that time would have been well over 10,000, it would appear, however, that the rate of unionisation would have been between 50 and 60 percent. This comparatively low rate conflicts not only with the earlier given rates, but also with the much higher ones suggested by the Port and Dock Worker Survey cited below. What the two tables do tend uniformly or cumulatively to confirm are the relative lack in change of position by the NMWU, MESAN and the FGT&GWU compared with the 1960s, the decline of the NPAWU and the rise of the R&PT&CSU.

Table 10.1 also gives us some information about union finance. Although the average union dues appear to be almost N1 per member per month, one notices that both the NPAWU and FGT&GWU have considerably lower dues than unions equal in comparative strength. In terms of financial strength, the R&PT&CSU is followed by the NMWU, NPAWU, MESAN and FGT&GWU, in that order. What did the unions do with the considerable amounts of money that some of them were getting regularly and automatically through check-off? Evidence is provided from the financial returns that unions have long been obliged to make to the Registrar of Trade Unions.[1] We may consider expenditure under the following heads: administration (office and staff); organisation (conferences, publications, education, tours, meetings); benefits; industrial action; external relations (affiliations, solidarity).

The major head was undoubtedly administration. In 1974 the R&PT&CSU spent some 60 percent of income on this. So did the much smaller NMWU. Staff salaries accounted for the largest part of this. In 1971, 1973 and 1974 the NPAWU spent respectively 37 percent, 60 percent and 52 percent of its total income on this item. In 1974 the R&PT&CSU spent around 30 percent on staff salaries and the NMWU around 34 percent.

In 1975 the MESAN (which had no fulltime officers) spent some 22 percent on staff salaries. If the NPAWU is any guide, then secretarial salaries alone accounted for a considerable proportion of total expenditure. In 1974 it spent on the salaries of its General Secretary, Deputy General Secretary and Delta District Secretary N3803, some 40 percent of its total income of N9409.

Spending on organisation seems to have varied considerably from one union to another, although being a rather small proportion of income. Thus in 1974 the NPAWU spent around seven percent and in 1975 the MESAN 11 percent on this item. The fact that in 1974 the NMWU spent as much as 26 percent is accounted for by 'reorganisation expenses', and 'seminar and course'. It is noticable that in general the unions spent little on

either education or publicity, even if one includes scholarships under the first item and all printing costs under the second. Thus, the 'seminar and course' mentioned accounted for only some three percent of total NMWU income in 1974, and printing less than half that. In fact, in the three other detailed accounts we have, education only comes up once, when the NPAWU spent N45.81 on scholarships in 1974.

Membership benefits appear to have been low or non-existent. On the four detailed accounts such items are specified but once, when the MESAN allowed N40 for 'death benefits'. When Akinwamide was sacked from NPA in 1976, the R&PT&CSU supported him on full salary while it fought for his reinstatement. Unions often paid legal fees for members charged with criminal offences. Perhaps one should consider the considerable customary sums for 'entertainment' as a membership benefit, even though this perk was usually limited to officers and activists. The only other item that could be found under the head of benefits was a small purchase of shares in CFAO, one of the major foreign-owned trading companies, by the R&PT&CSU.

Industrial action was mentioned but once, by the R&PT&CSU in 1974, and here it was unfortunately grouped with other organisational and administrative expenses. It is noticeable, however, that the same organisation was the only one to identify legal and Industrial Arbitration Tribunal expenses, both presumably related to industrial action.

One external relations item that came up for most of the unions was that of affiliation. This, however, usually accounted for only one or two percent of income. As for solidarity payments of any kind, the only one to be found was a contribution of N20 made by the NMWU to the Drought Relief Fund in 1974.

If expenditure is any guide to the nature of unions, what are we to make of the above pattern? It would appear that the trade unions were basically administrative and representative offices. Given the minimal amounts spent on education, consultation and agitation, it would be difficult to consider them as organisers of the workers. Given the virtual non-existence of benefits it would be difficult to consider them as welfare bodies. Given the minimal expenditure on industrial action it would be hard to consider them as a movement. And the low proportion devoted to any kind of external relations suggests that the work and interests of the trade unions were basically confined to the NPA itself. Finally, even the efforts to improve the formal functioning of the unions were insignificant. We have already mentioned in Chapter 6 the ambitious projects of the R&PT&CSU enunciated at its 1973 conference. But in 1976 the union was still housed in

the two or three rooms behind the ULC headquarters at 97 Herbert Macaulay Street. Its office equipment and staffing appeared no more adequate than those of smaller NPA unions. A few shares had been taken out in a commercial company but there was no sign of any cooperative, insurance or welfare activity. To all intents and purposes, the union's administration appeared concentrated in the hands of its General Secretary. The only sign of some kind of administrative development was the existence of a 'Research and Information Bureau'. But this was not so much what it might seem to be (although it did issue leaflets) as a group of organisers. It had apparently been created by the union's National Working Committee precisely to spread a load of work that was evidently beyond the capacities of one man. Finally, the 1976 conference decided to create two fulltime Assistant General Secretaryships. Of all the proposals, it seems that these were the only ones to be put into practice.

## 10.2. Factionalism

Whereas the radical-moderate split of the 1950s-60s in the NPA was fought out in political/ideological terms (see Chapter 6, Introduction), that of the 1970s was expressed largely in those of ethnicity. It is true that one does find the moderates accusing the militants of using 'unscientific' industrial relations methods, of being 'political' (appealing to forces outside NPA?), of 'violence' or 'anarchism'. But the main accusation was of tribalism.

If we look at all the available evidence on this matter (Waterman 1979h:Ch.4), what accusations does one find? Within the NPAWU: in 1975 Beyioku warned the leadership against tribalism, and Alade accused it of appealing to Yoruba sentiment to oust a branch leadership it alleged to be Ibo-Efik dominated. By the R&PT&CSU: in 1976 Adebola accused three top Ibo managers of conspiring with Ibo members within the union to put down Adebola's recruiting successes solely to tribal propaganda and intimidation; in late 1976 three leaflets by NMTUF supporters accused Adebola of appealing to Yorubas by stressing the non-Yoruba predominance in NPA management. Additionally, in the heated atmosphere of late-1976, three or four union leaders were making accusations against the R&PT&CSU. It was said that Adebola was an 'arch-tribalist', that his union leadership was 'dominated by Yorubas', and that a 1971 split in the NMTUF was 'tribally motivated'. In addition to such references to ethnicity, we can find the R&PT&CSU being referred to disparagingly as the 'Arab Union', which was presumably an attempt to label it as muslim before a largely christian workforce. R&PT&CSU leaders were more concerned to deny such charges and accuse their attackers of bad faith than to counter-charge them with tribalism. Thus, even one who said that the

other union leaderships 'were all non-Yoruba and have mostly Ibo officers' added that the NPA unions were 'not tribalistic in nature' (Interview Notes, December 1976).

It is difficult to obtain evidence for or against many such accusations. What we can do is to see to what extent the composition of union leaderships might provide grounds for them. We can only do this in a rather arbitrary and rule of thumb manner,[2] but this should prove sufficient for the present purpose. Thus, we could talk of 'predominance' if one ethnic group had more than half of the leadership positions in a union, or of 'balance' if no single group had this. We could then analyse the ethnic composition of union leaderships, taking for each of the main organisations a list of activists, a list of national officers and a list of the Lagos area leadership.[3] On this basis it would be possible to speak of Yoruba 'predominance' in the R&PT&CSU and a 1971 NMTUF caretaker committee it sponsored, of eastern minority group (or these plus Ibo) 'predominance' in the NMWU, of Ibo predominance in an NMTUF sponsored inquiry into the NPA Accounts Department (NMTUF Memo June (?) 1976).

It was probably the Yoruba predominance in the R&PT&CSU leadership that facilitated accusations against it. This does not, however, prove that they are true. Questions remain about how this 'Yoruba-dominated' organisation managed to hold its non-Yoruba branches in other ports and to win over non-Yoruba members - and leaders - of other unions despite this image. Finally, one is required to consider why the R&PT&CSU did not make similar public attacks on what it could easily have called Ibo, or 'Ibo and Calabar', or 'Eastern', domination of the NMWU. The answer to all these questions is probably provided by an NPA IR officer:

> When Adebola made gains in the Engineering Department, it was on the basis of winning an up-grading. It was not an ethnic appeal: most of the ones he won over were Ibo...The other unions have more motive to attack Adebola for tribalism than he has to attack them, because he can say they are ineffective. (Interview Notes, December 1976).

A question remains over why the R&PT&CSU and NMWU permitted themselves a certain ethnic predominance amongst their leaders in a very ethnically-conscious workforce. In the case of the NMWU there was little choice. 'Floating staff' should preferably be able to float, and it appears that the NPA recruited them traditionally from amongst ethnic groups living on the creeks in southern and eastern Nigeria. It appears that

Zudonu's constituency was possibly one of ethnic as well as of occupational category. But in so far as the R&PT&CSU was appealing to the Traffic and Engineering Departments, or to both manual and clerical workers within these, it would have been faced by an ethnically-mixed constituency. According to the Port and Dock Worker Survey, there was a Yoruba majority in none of these categories, in some cases there were more Ibo than Yoruba, and there was always 20 to 30 percent of other groups. Perhaps the Yoruba predominance in the R&PT&CSU leadership was a leftover from a previous period in which that union (like the NMWU) found its security in an ethnic identification. But this is speculation. What can be concluded with more certainty is that ethnic 'balance' was no guarantee of a leadership's success (NPAWU) and ethnic 'predominance' no barrier to it (R&PT&CSU). A sucessful appeal to NPA workers in general required avoidance of an ethnic appeal (R&PT&CSU); a last-ditch defensive effort seems to have required an appeal not only to this but also to religious identifications (NMTUF majority).

## 10.3. National and international affiliation

Whilst national and international affiliation were matters of great import to portworker unions in the 1950s and 1960s (see Chapter 6, Introduction), they seem to have been of peripheral significance in the 1970s. This does not mean that they were of no interest to portworker union leaders, as we will see in the cases of the NMWU and the R&PT&CSU. These affiliations, however, seem to have been of interest rather for the personal opportunities they offered than for any common orientation they implied, or any means they might have seemed to have provided for for overcoming conflicts at industry level.

O. Zudono was evidently a convinced 'internationalist', keeping up the ties with the ITF and the US that we will see Adebola to have either broken or lost interest in. During an interview in August 1975 he declared his hopes of attending a Moral Rearmament[4] meeting in Brazil later that year. Amongst his members he was known as 'International Zu'. The relationship of the NMWU with the ITF seems to have been of positive value to the union. It organised a joint seminar with the ITF in Port Harcourt in 1972, and Zudonu addressed two others organised by ITF for its Nigerian or West African affiliates in 1974 and 1975. It also received from the ITF a duplicating machine as a contribution to its post-Civil War programme (NMWU) Conference Documents 1973). Whilst its relationship with the US unions was equally warm, it led the union into conflicts with the ULC. In 1972, Zudonu attended a Seminar on labour journalism organised by the American Federation of Labour-Congress of Industrial Organisations (AFL-CIO) and the US Agency for International Develop-

ment in the USA. This enabled him to meet Gleason, President of the International Longshoreman's Association, and to obtain from him the offer of a car for the NMWU. Zudonu had only to obtain the approval of Irving Brown, 'Director of the AALC [African-American Labour Centre PW] in New York who is also my personal friend and a true friend of our Union'.[5] This was obtained and the arrangements went forward. But, at this point, the ULC objected that the bilateral agreement violated an accord between itself and the AALC that all aid be channeled through the ULC. Zudonu was then involved in a dispute with the ULC that led him to ask whether the NMWU should not

> re-examine our relationship with the ULC with a view to improving it now or it will surely deteriorate to a level where great damage may be done to it. (NMWU Conference Documents 1973).

Although Zudonu made it clear that there was no intention to disaffiliate from the ULC, NMWU protests were apparently sufficient to get the ULC to withdraw its objections. The car eventually arrived in 1974, was first registered in the name of Zudonu personally and then became the property of the union. As far as the NMWU was concerned, the energy spent in obtaining the vehicle, and the conflicts surrounding it, must have been easily compensated for by the material advantages it offered and the prestige of having a large Peugeot stationwagon with the union's name emblazoned thereon.

Although Zudonu, in complaining of ULC behaviour in the car case, had protested the union's loyalty, the NMWU appears to have been generally dissatisfied with the ULC. Reporting on the 1971 ULC Congress, Zudonu stated that it

> brought into [the] open yet [again] the inordinate ambition for leadership conflict and intrigue that have been the main cause of division in the Trade Union movement in this country. There is more than enough for any Trade Unionist to do in this country but greed, selfishness and vain pride will not allow people to cooperate with one another for the interest of the workers we profess to lead. (NMWU Conference Documents 1973).

The situation within the ULC seems to have reflected a certain stagnation, lack of direction and demoralisation amongst all the portworker unions except the R&PT&CSU. When the NLC was created at the end of 1975 this was welcomed by Zudonu, who himself became one of its Vice-Presidents. Although he again expressed the hope that this would bring about the industrial union which he had long dreamed of, this was not - yet - to

be so. The 'industrial union' eventually created was brought into existence at the instance of the Nigerian state, not that of the industrial, national or international trade union movement.

Although, like the other portworker unions, the R&PT&CSU was traditionally affiliated with the ULC, its relationships with the national (and international) trade union bodies have had special characteristics. Both Adebola and Adegbesan were prominent within the ULC. Adebola was its President until he was deposed and given the formal function of Life Patron in 1969. Adegbesan had been elected Deputy President of the ULC in 1971 and held this post until it was dissolved. Adebola and Adegbesan were both active within the ICFTU and its African Regional Organisation (AFRO). From 1960 to 1964, Adebola had been Chairman of AFRO, and from 1962 to 1969 a Vice President of the ICFTU. Adegbesan became Vice-President of AFRO and a member of the governing body of the ICFTU. He made numerous trips abroad in the 1960s and 1970s, to the USA, West Germany, Mexico and Libya. He followed courses at the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in Germany and Harvard University, USA. Possibly he was an acceptable substitute for H.P.Adebola in such international bodies, since Adebola had begun to distance himself from them in the late 1960s. In 1969, becoming aware of the CIA involvement in the international activities of the US unions (which were now the main financial prop of his own ULC), he became as bitterly opposed to them as he had once been to the communists:

> I formed the impression that some of the officials of the foreign trade unions in Nigeria had something to do with the CIA of America... [S]ince the advent of the African-American Labour Centre in Nigeria... treachery and betrayal has found a comfortable asylum in the Nigerian trade union movement. (Adebola Memorandum, March 22, 1976).

The clash with the Americans seems to have meant that Adebola lost his leadership of the ULC to American-backed unionists. Adebola and Adegbesan were apparently amongst that faction of the ULC that favoured the creation of the NLC. They claim to have successfully got a unanimous vote for this at the Kano Conference of the ULC in 1975 despite the efforts of an unnamed 'imported guest' who tried to obstruct it (R&PT&CSU Conference Documents, 1976). Support for the NLC paid off in the election of Adegbesan as leader of the Steering Committee in 1975. His name then became known amongst the newspaper-reading public as the leader (if briefly) of the first unified central body of Nigerian trade unions for many years. In 1976 Adebola's name was also much in the press when he appeared before the

Adebiyi Tribunal, speaking as a ruthless critic of foreign influence on Nigerian unions, of the trade union centres themselves and particularly of the ULC (Adebola Memorandum, March 22, 1976; Adebiyi Proceedings 1976: 25-7). He thus appeared as the representative of an independent nationalist unionism, free of the mud which clung to most of the older generation of national trade union leaders in Nigeria. In later denouncing to the government a US trade union representative, he declared himself to be acting as a 'loyal', 'reasonable' and 'patriotic' Nigerian. He had apparently turned back not only to his own union base but also to his original identification with the Nigerian state. It is probably as a reasonable, loyal and patriotic Nigerian that he would like himself to be considered by others. His followers could by now have well dubbed him 'National Adebola'.

## 10.4 Union leaders

In dealing with the unions in Chapter 6 we have in large part in fact been dealing with union leaderships or even a dominating individual officer (usually a longstanding general secretary). Survey evidence from 1975 and 1976, as well as earlier interviews and additional statements enable us to isolate them from their organisations and obtain an impression of the characteristics and opinions of union officers as a group.[6]

### 10.4.1 Characteristics

The backgrounds of union officers do not differ significantly from those of NPA manual workers. By ethnic origin they are mixed. They are rather older than the average NPA worker, with most of them being over 40. A 'young man' amongst the union officers is in his thirties rather than his twenties. Lengths and types of education are mixed, with a few having school certificate or equivalent, and several having trade training within NPA. Most have been working in NPA for well over 10 years, many for over 20. Amongst the fulltime officials there are ex-manual workers as well as an ex-senior staff man (from outside NPA). And amongst the unpaid officers one finds men from the occupations found amongst the members - a fireman-greaser, an able seaman, a fitter, an assistant supervisor, a marine engineering assistant, a clerical supervisor, etc. Apart from one unpaid officer who receives an honorarium of N15 a month as general secretary of his small union, the others receive nothing above their pay. Of the fulltime officers interviewed, one was receiving N159 and another N268 per month. Whilst the first sum is not much different from the average manual wage found in our survey of NPA, the second is 1.8 times above it. Another fulltimer, however, was earning N330 per month in 1973 - some 3.6 times the maximum of a skilled tradesman in that year (Interview Notes, August

1973). However, even this considerable differential would have put him somewhere near the bottom of the senior staff scale in that year. Whilst some fulltime secretaries may enjoy the living standards of the intermediate salaried strata in Nigeria, and, whilst the unpaid officers might enjoy freedom from their official NPA occupations, it would be difficult to argue that they are a race apart from the workers they organise.

As one might expect, the officers have many years of union membership and activity behind them. Whilst some had first become officers just two to five years earlier, several had done so as long as 15, 20, or 30 or more years back. And behind even the shortest period of office holding there appears to lie 10 to 20 or more years of membership. It thus seems that union leadership is not quickly won in the NPA. When questioned on their knowledge of their own unions, some interesting replies were given. Thus, only one gave an accurate idea of his union's membership in Lagos Port. The others either did not know or gave wildly exaggerated figures. Behind this lies, no doubt, not only confusion about the meaning of the word 'member', but also the absence of reliable figures for 'financial' members, and the current conflicts over representativity. Whilst most knew of their organisation's present or past affiliation nationally, far less knew of the international affiliations. Knowledge about international affiliation seemed to be correlated with participation in trade union courses - these being often organised by the internationals. The great majority of the officers had taken part in such courses, at the ULC-AALC Trade Union Institute in Lagos, at Ibadan University, or abroad under the auspices of the ICFTU, the AFL-CIO, the German or Swiss trade unions.

It is possible to find amongst the NPA union leaders almost the entire range of types I have earlier identified within Nigeria. These can be named as the worker, the entrepreneur, the professional and the senior staff leader.

The first is represented by the former able-seaman who became General Secretary of the NMTUF, J.E. Bone Okoro. Born in 1933, he had a christian education, became a schoolteacher, but abandoned this for better-paid work within the old Marine Department in 1954. Although he would at first have been a manual labourer, there is little doubt that his background must have helped him when 'in 1960 he decided to make a career' of trade unionism (NMTUF 1975). He was at first a branch representative of his union, the NMWU, later becoming its Assistant General Secretary. He has attended three or four residential courses, at Ibadan University, or at the Trade Union Institute of the AALC and the ULC. Okoro remained an employee of the NPA,

even when released for work within the unions. He is a modest and simple person who 'loves reading, politics and societies. He is married and has a number of children' (NMTUF 1975).[7]

The second type is represented by a man I interviewed in 1973, before I had made contact with the NPA unions. He claimed to have been approached by an NPA union, the secretary of which had fled to the east during the Civil War. He said that it paid him £N 90 per month but that he left this to become the secretary of an association of NPA technical officers at £N200 per month. This organisation had an income of over £N1,000 per month from check-off, provided him with an officer, secretary, typist, messenger and a Peugeot car. Careful readers (not to speak of NPA unionists) may be as puzzled as I initially was about the wealthy union of which this man claimed to have been secretary in 1971. I found that he had held the two positions claimed, but that the rest of the claim was fantasy. His earlier and later career is better attested for. Born in 1934 and secondary-educated, he became a laboratory technician and then a union activist. In 1958 he became fulltime secretary of the union at his former workplace, came under the influence of communism and was a founder of the first NTUC in the early 1960s. In the 1960s he was picked up by the International Federation of Christian Trade Unions (IFCTU) and appointed its West African representative. In 1966 he was associated with its Nigerian affiliate, the Nigerian Workers Council (NWC), into which the IFCTU was putting large amounts of money. Although the NWC split on ethnic grounds, amongst accusations of misuse of funds, the IFCTU kept its confidence in this man, and recommended him for industrial relations training in Europe. On his return to Nigeria he became a personnel officer, although not in the NPA.[8]

The professional leader - one for whom it is a lifetime commitment rather than a stage in career -is well represented by H.P.Adebola. Much has already been said about his attitudes. Here we will fill in on his personal characteristics. Interviewed in 1973, Adebola claimed to have been a professional trade unionist for 13 years, to earn around N2,000 as a union secretary, and another N1,300 as a member of two government boards. He was married, had six children, and owned his own five-bedroomed house in a middle-class area of Lagos. In his own home town in Western Nigeria he owned a piece of laand. Adebola is a one-time station officer within the NRC. He was, during the 'political days', active in one of the elite parties and had represented it within the House of Chiefs. He claims to have had legal training within the Inns of Court whilst in London, as well as from Lagos University. Although always careful to listen to the unpaid union officers who officially employ him, Adebola has always been the

dominating person in his union - an organisation apparently run as a 'popular bossdom'. His office was always run as a one-man outfit, the workers within it always deferring to him and refusing to say a word to anyone in his absence. Never a great public orator or crowd leader, like Imoudu, Adebola comes into his own in bargaining or courtroom sessions. Here his abrasive tongue and domineering presence are employed to maximum advantage. Considering unionism a 'noble profession', 'like a religion', he proudly declares his personal holdings, that he has never received money from any body other than his union, never used a union scholarship for his children, and been cleared by two tribunals in the late 1960s (Adebola Memorandum, March 22, 1976). He made this statement at the Adebiyi Tribunal, which exposed and punished practically every other major national union figure in Nigeria apart from him. Having thrown all his considerable energies into union work at industrial level, Adebola was held in awe by his followers and in considerable fear by his opponents.[9]

The senior staff leader is represented by the president of Adebola's union, J.O.Adegbesan. He has a very similar background to Adebola, except that he remained in the NRC when Adebola abandoned it for full-time unionism. Born in 1929, he became a senior station-master in 1977. Apart from his industrial, national and international union posts, he was appointed a member of the National Library Board by the Federal Military Government in 1976. When the Nigerian unions created the first NLC in 1975, it was under his chairmanship. Okeke Ugwuanyi, one of his admirers, writes of him that

> Mr. Adegbesan is a complete gentleman, simple, unassuming and approachable. His style of leadership is worth emulating by all those who believe in trade unionism without bitterness. (Ugwuanyi, October 24, 1977).

Ugwuanyi was the leader of the Mechanical Workshops workers who moved en masse out of the NPAWU and into the R&PT&CSU at a particular point of time in the mid-1970s. It was he who revealed the status appeal of this type of leader to at least some NPA workers:

> The leadership of the R&PT&CSU is composed of men and women whose educational background or outlook and skills compare favourably with those on the management side. (R&PT&CSU Memorandum, August 17, 1976).

We must not forget that the victory of the radical R&PT&CSU within the NPA in the 1970s was also a victory of professional and senior staff leaders over worker and entrepreneurial ones.

10.4.2. Opinions

Whether or not NPA union leaders were a race apart from the men they led, they did have capacities and a role that separated them off from the ordinary workers, which brought them into a relationship with management, provided them with a quite distinct ideological training, and made personal social mobility a practical possibility. To what extent, if any, did this lead to a particular set of attitudes that might differentiate them from the workers they led? The Open-Ended Interview Schedule (Appendix 2) was used in a dozen interviews. What did these tell us, firstly, of their aspirations and expectations? Half of the interviewees wanted, and expected, to stay or advance in a trade union career, one having earlier rejected the possibility of a senior staff or industrial relations appointment. Several of them aspired to fulltime trade unionism or some professional career - usually as an industrial relations officer or consultant. A couple of others, both less educated than their fellows, favoured private trade or commerce.

Asked about the government ownership and control of NPA, none of them could imagine any other pattern, most of them feeling that NPA problems were either due to lack of NPA autonomy, or to internal management (or management-union) conflicts and shortcomings. Only one raised the necessity for union representation on the NPA Board.

Whilst attitudes towards the junior supervisors were mixed, some stressing their good and some their bad qualities (arrogance, lack of qualification), majority attitudes towards officers tended to be critical or hostile.

Answers to the above question often flowed into those on work motivation and how to improve it. Replies concentrated on NPA shortcomings, particularly ethnic favouritism, bad conditions and the stress on paper qualifications. A few stressed the consequent demoralisation of the workers. Positive solutions were commonly seen in terms of better promotion possibilities, regrading, training, a high basic wage, etc.

If not all the unionists would consider NPA management as partners, it was impossible to find more than a couple who considered them (or anyone else in Nigeria) as enemies of the workers. Most recognised there was a worker-management or worker-government conflict, but did not consider either management or government as an enemy of the workers. The range of attitudes amongst them may be reflected in the change of mood found within this declaration:

Nobody actually is an enemy to us. We are all

> fellow Nigerians. In one family you get some people at the top and some who are suffering. This [present system? PW] is the system the nationalists fought for. But those who got in regarded themselves as a privileged class. Some jump from the commoners to the elite group. Even if they are from the same womb, they have made it. They are the enemies, they are! they are! They make it possible for honest government intentions to be frustrated.

Two leaders of the unions that had been losing members to the R&PT&CSU sought the workers' enemies closer to home:

> No. There are no such people in NPA. But this clamour for trade union leadership! Udoji put skilled tradesmen on 05, then Alhaji [Adebola] told government that in all other corporations the skilled tradesmen were in 04. So then Williams and Williams put then onto 04. The unions are the enemies of themselves!

If there were no real enemies, were there some brothers in arms of the NPA workers? The majority mentioned a specific corporation, or corporation employees in general, one of them stressing the similarity of situation and union structure, another mentioning the liaison committee that had functioned during the Udoji dispute. Only one mentioned dockworkers specifically or private-sector workers generally. No other possible allies were identified.

Whilst there was evidently little or no feeling of identification with dockworkers or the dockworker unions, this does not mean that the NPA union leaders were unaware of their existence or their situation. Whilst none of them could imagine a fundamental change in the ownership and control of NPA itself, they were unanimous on the necessity for a government or NPA takeover from the private contractors. Two of them recollected past union action (R&PWUN or NPAWU) on behalf of the dockworkers. Most of the others spoke of the sufferings of dockworkers. But it was evident that many of them were as concerned with the inefficiency of contractor ownership as with this factor. And one even claimed that some problems of the dockworkers were not so bad as those of NPA workers.

Given their feeling that NPA workers were suffering, but suffering on their own and even divided amongst themselves, what did they think about possibilities for the labouring poor in general to achieve its desires? They felt universally that this could only

be done through the unions and through the strengthening and amalgamation of the unions. In many cases, however, amalgamation was seen as dependent upon government action and there were further expressions of dependency on others. At the other extreme was a man who favoured a 'sort of' Labour Government and another who qualified dependence on government unification of the unions as follows:

> There is no central labour organisation now. Government is doing everything itself. If we get one of our own choice, it will carry the peasants along and organise them. The we will be in a better position.

Given the lack of identification with other workers or unions in Nigeria it is not, perhaps, surprising that almost half the unionists had no idea about any possible brothers in arms elsewhere in the world. The majority that did know referred to courses and equipment offered by the ICFTU, the ITF or the AFL-CIO. One talked of educational assistance from the East as well as the West. Not one made a specific reference to African workers or unions. Indeed, only one mentioned workers at all. It would appear as if working-class internationalism is in the NPA case more a relationship between moderate Western trade union organisations and top NPA union leaders than anything of a broader nature.

## 10.5. Union followers

We will now deal with the organisational characteristics and the attitudes of the NPA workers - those to whom the union leaders universally refer as 'members', whether they actually pay a contribution or not. Evidence on organisational characteristics is from the Port and Dock Worker Survey (Appendix 1), the nature of which has been reported in Chapter 3.

### 10.5.1. Characteristics

Union membership was claimed by nearly 80 percent of the portworker sample, and 90 percent of these claimed to be paying dues. Bearing in mind the general rate of unionisation in the NPA, these are very high rates. But even if the respondents were not actually members (or not actually financial members), the response indicates a favourable attitude towards union membership. Whilst only five percent of those interviewed could not name their union, nearly one-quarter were unable to name any union officers. Furthermore, over one half did not know the ULC affiliation of their union. Just over one-third had attended no union meeting in 1975 despite the fact that this was the year of the Udoji Award and disputes. A favourable attitude towards unions was evidently not

matched by information on them or participation in them. Furthermore, less than half the respondents claimed strike experience in what are two fairly strike-prone departments of the Port (Traffic and Engineering). However, nearly two-thirds of them had taken part in other forms of protest - mostly a 'work-to-rule'. Given that this term had in part come to replace 'strike' following the legal restrictions on the latter, perhaps this answer gives a better idea of industrial protest activity than the former one.

The 80 percent union support and over 60 percent protest experience suggests a quite well-unionised and active workforce, even if some of the other answers suggest lower levels of knowledge and activity. To what extent do these features find expression in worker attitudes? And to what extent do these attitudes match or diverge from those of their leaders? The same open-ended interviews used for the leaders (Appendix 2) were used for their followers. Those interviewed were 12 workers, amongst whom five were clerical and seven manual. Amongst the clerks there was one supervisor, the rest being Quay Staff II. All were from the Traffic Department. Amongst the manual workers were an unskilled porter and blacksmith, a couple of semi-skilled equipment operators, a skilled carpenter and an assistant supervisor. Most of them were from the Engineering Department.

### 10.5.2. Opinions

What, firstly, were the aspirations and expectations of these men? One or two aspired only to promotion or better conditions within NPA, but most hoped to make a career either within a profession or in a petty commerce. Except for the one who hoped to become a general manager ('with God's will'), the others were more realistic. The would-be professionals were following courses and/or had been union activists. Those aspiring to petty commerce or crafts based their expectations on their own skills, backed up by the generous retirement benefits recently announced:

> I am not only a blacksmith but a locksmith too. But it is not recognised here. When retired, if I get blacksmith work in my own town, or locksmith. Or I can make petty-petty trading or something to help my family. I expect to stay here until I retire, only four years more... They will pay me my money and then I can plan. You can't say what you will have, although. It is not like Europe.

The question of government ownership and control of NPA was usually interpreted in terms of extended ministerial control, something that most were opposed to. Others took it to mean the present managerial set-up,

of which the manual workers in Engineering were bitterly critical. One of the second group proposed a private enterprise solution to corruption and inefficiency within his department. Whilst attitudes towards the junior supervisors tended to be sympathetic, even where critical, those toward senior staff tended to be much harsher, particularly amongst the manual workers:

> There is open disagreement between officers. They openly accuse each other of inefficiency or weaknesses. There is a lack of discipline, therefore it is hard to apply discipline...

Another thought the problem was the failure to promote by seniority from the ranks:

> A person who spent 30 years [as an NPA worker] should <u>be</u> senior staff...

On motivation, workers spoke of pay and conditions. The supplies of fixed-price essential goods being distributed to state-sector workers were appreciated, but it was said that they were always out of stock, or that officers were supplied four to five times as much as the men. The question of such differential treatment was raised repeatedly:

> We need beter rate - belly full - then you work hard all day. But if one gets £N200 and one gets five shillings, then he won't want to work because we too cheated... Nothing worry us than money...

And the issue of promotion:

> Someone who has been in the service for 20 years without promotion is a disillusioned worker. Even though he is hard working he will be disheartened and reluctant to obey the supervisor because already his spirit has been wounded.

Although one worker was able to identify a particular head of department and 'one type of General Manager' as enemies, most of them could not identify any such. This incapacity to identify enemies was in some cases literally so:

> I cannot say we have enemies. There is inability of management to reason along with modern demands. But we do not have <u>visible</u> enemies as such.

Or, 'I can't say about outside NPA. I am not a unionist'. Or, again, 'There should be but I don't know the people'. The following view was probably more representative:

> No, I cannot tell [if we have enemies]. When we say we are suffering and that government does not care for us, we are just talking in general, because we all make up Nigeria.

As for brothers in arms, most mentioned corporation workers and declared their ignorance of others. As one put it,

> So many people are suffering the same thing. But I can only speak of my department since I have little chance of going out.

Two or three mentioned the dockworkers, one to say they were 'enjoying' more than NPA workers. Another said,

> Dock labour is fighting for similar. They are most hit...[Also] other shipping company workers. All in the port industry have similar problems.

As for how they felt the poor in Nigeria could achieve their desires, there was a range of answers, from one who thought this could only be achieved through hard work to one who declared

> The only power we have is demonstration, work-to-rule and strikes. By trade unionism. That is the only weapon after so many negotiations have failed. Strong and united labour front, because we are more than the big men [the rich and the powerful. PW].

Most, however, felt that worker organisation needed government assistance:

> Before workers can do anything they need central organisation. But this requires government action. Only military government can do this.

Or - presenting military government in a less-positive light:

> We have union representatives to put our demands...In the colonial days and political days we could take industrial action and government would give or not give...But with military government we have so many restrictions.

As for foreign friends of the Nigerian workers, the only one who could think of any was a former union leader who mentioned the ICFTU and the ILO.

### 10.5.3. Discussion

What does this interview data suggest? Despite the fact

that most NPA workers are likely to spend their wage-earning life within its junior staff, there are still high aspirations to professional or petty-entrepreneurial occupations. Wage labour within the NPA appears to be considered more as a - possibly long - period in the worker's life than as characterising his social status. The retirement benefits are rather an encouragement to aspire to petty-entrepreneurship than to a time of rest. Both family demands and the insecurity of such benefits in a time of high inflation in any case require a continuation of economic activity. As for the aspiration to professional employment, this is fired both by past example within NPA, and by the possibilities (hypothetical or not) apparently offered by the commercial boom.

The alternative to bureaucratic state and managerial control of NPA was seen either in terms of corrective action from above (a government-worker alliance against management?) or in those of private enterprise. Generalised grievances, pointed criticism and marked hostility toward authoritarian and arbitrary management was not taken to require independent worker or union intervention.

There was generalised hostility to the senior staff, to the differentials they enjoy, and to the barriers that exist between the junior and senior. From pre-colonial tradition and/or late-colonial practice there seems to be some expectation that each should in his own lifetime progress from being a 'junior' to being a 'senior'. Such an expectation of eventual promotion to a position of influence and respect is, thus, not simply due to 'traditional' age-grading. It is also due to the British civil service practice of annual increments, and to the experience of rapid promotion of many junior staff to officer (and even top management) status during the period of rapid Nigerianisation associated with de-colonisation. It is striking to observe that the NPA workers literally cannot identify any enemies to themselves. They do not think of any social category in Nigeria in such terms. Given their resentments, the extent to which they accept a view of society as existing of one community is remarkable. Once again, experience of the relatively classless rural community may have been reinforced by the colonial experience, which created an image of a universe divided along racial lines. Again, the belief in classlessness would have been reinforced by the past promotions of fellow workers (often without academic qualifications).

Equally striking is NPA worker inability to identify those in a common position to themselves. In part we can take the inability to identify friends as a complement to the inability to identify enemies. Given, however, common NPA worker residence alongside other

wage-earners, petty entrepreneurs and the unemployed, and given that significant wage rises usually occur as a result of common national action along with other wage earners, one would have expected them to see some brothers in arms beyond other corporation workers. The inability to do so may be explained in terms of the nature of NPA as an enterprise and as an employer. As a state corporation it does not operate on narrow profit-and-loss calculations, this distinguishing it sharply from the multinational companies that have dozens of branches in the Apapa area alone. And, although its conditions may not be better than those of the local TNCs, the near-100 percent security NPA offers seems to turn it into a universe which not only surrounds the worker in the present but also (despite his aspirations) for the future. Be this as it may, the NPA workers clearly see themselves as isolated from others and evidently have no conception of a working class.

In their attitudes toward collective action one does find the positive evaluation of trade unionism and worker protest that one would expect from their union membership and participation in industrial action. Yet this is clearly qualified by feelings either of powerlessness in the face of military rule, or of dependency on government to strengthen union organisation for the workers. The ambiguity here is crucial since it bears on the willingness to take action either against the state or within the trade unions. We will see that in practice worker action is aimed rather at NPA management than at the state.

From these replies it would seem that the workers do not differ significantly in their views from their leaders. The only significant differences would seem to be leadership criticism of unions and workers, and the greater confidence of union leaders in union action. As far as the relationship with leadership attitudes is concerned, the problem may be not so much a gap, as the very closeness. Despite its wider experience, the leadership - largely trained in Western liberalism and social democracy - has no alternative ideology to that of the workers themselves.

## 10.6. Summary

We have been discussing the findings as we went along, but it might nonetheless be worthwhile repeating these findings and trying to find some connection between them.

In discussing the organising and financing of the unions, it was suggested that these revealed them to be primarily representative organs, largely confined to the NPA, and only peripherally engaged in education, welfare, mobilisation or even recruitment. Even as

representative and administrative agencies they were neither well-structured nor developing. What we seem to have here, in fact, is an extreme form of trade union atrophy, related to their reduction to collective bargaining bodies. Even the R&PT&CSU shows here little evidence of the activism that was attracting new members to it in the 1970s.

The close similarity between the attitudes of leaders and followers that we have just noted is probably related to the type of trade unionism being practised. Given that the leaders were not actually leading their followers, they did not need to be any more advanced in attitudes than the rank and file workers. All they needed were certain administrative and diplomatic qualities. This explains the absence in the 1970s of such a charismatic worker leader as M.A.O. Imoudu had been in the 1950s and early-1960s. It also explains why a professional and senior staff type of leadership was able to triumph over a worker or entrepreneurial one.

The major difference between leaders and followers was reduced to the simple hierarchical one. But, as professional or part-time union officers, the leaders not only enjoyed such minor privileges as their contacts with management might have brought them. They also had access to the national and international trade union movements. This access was of no interest to their followers, who had been ideologically demobilised, and who could expect no collective or personal benefits from such affiliation. And, indeed, the national and international movements could offer little to the leaders apart from courses, trips abroad and other such perks. They could only offer the traditional platitudes of reformist unionism - policies decreasingly relevant to Nigerian unionists. They were policies, also, with too little ideological or moral content to help the NPA unionists overcome their petty personal rivalries.

It has been earlier suggested that there might have been a popular ethnic basis to the ethnic domination of certain NPA unions. There was certainly such past popular support for fraction- or stratum-based unions. But the basis for the latter was evidently eroding in the 1970s, because little or no appeal was made to it by union leaderships. In the absence of powerful departmental or stratum sentiment, and in the absence of any meaningful ideological appeals, leaders seeking to preserve their personal positions of power could only play the ethnic card. In this they failed. The R&PT&CSU leaders won by striking the same radical note that one can find amongst their portworker union followers: one of common resentment against the privileges and incompetence of at least their immediate oppressors. Combining a virulent attack on NPA manage-

ment with an explicit or implicit call to action by all NPA workers, the R&PT&CSU helped them to identify at least some enemies and friends.

NOTES

1. Although unions are legally obliged to make such returns by a fixed date in Nigeria, many did not do so in the the past, and were not punished for their failure. Moreover, only the main heads of expenditure are required, permitting unions to set out expenses in their own individual manner and according to their own desires. Searches were made of the Registrar's files in two succeeding years (1975, 1976), obtaining returns as follows: NPAWU 1971, 1973, 1974 (detailed); R&PT&CSU 1971, 1974 (detailed); FGT&GWU 1971. Although not permitting comparison across NPA and for a single year, the data does provide an important source of information on union expenditure.

2. For a more systematic approach to such an analysis, permitting rather more definite conclusions, see Sandbrook 1975 (Appendix 3).

3. I was able to find such lists for various years in the 1970s for all these levels in the three major unions, with but one exception. I could find no conference list (for the 'activists') for the R&PT&CSU. It seems probable that such a conference list would contradict the implications of the other lists for the ethnic structure of the R&PT&CSU leadership. In the case of the R&PT&CSU, therefore, 'predominance' can only be taken as applying to the national officers and the Lagos leadership. Here, however, it is undeniable. Ethnicity was established by identification of names that clearly belonged to certain groups. This is a rule of thumb method that would not be approved by an ethnologist, but it is one used by Nigerians themselves. The 'groups' that could be identified during analysis were Hausa-Fulani, Edo, Yoruba, Ibo, a 'group of groups' that I have called 'eastern minority', and 'others'. Whilst the first four are commonly accepted as ethnic identities by Nigerians, 'eastern minority' is again my own term for a diverse collection of groups that have in common that they were minorities in the formerly Ibo-dominated Eastern Region of Nigeria and neighbouring areas. They include Efik, Ijaw, Isoko, Bonny, Okrika, Ikwere and Calabar. In this case both ethnologists and those identified might disapprove. I can only say that it is what appears to characterise those who led the NMWU.

4. The MRA (founded 1938) is a crusading christian organisation, preaching brotherly love between races and classes - as earlier between coloniser and colonised. It is fiercely anti-communist and has always directed its energies toward influential individuals in the business, political and union worlds. It was both a product of and contributor to the Cold War.

5. Irving Brown has frequently been named as the key CIA linkman within the international trade union movement. Philip Agee (1975: 693) describes him during an earlier period as 'representative of the American Federation of Labour and principal CIA agent for control of the ICFTU'. Although this specific accusation might not have been general knowledge amongst Nigerian trade unionists, general information of AALC-CIA links was evidently available. It is not without significance that whilst Adebola publicly broke with the Americans on this issue, Zudonu was still prepared to boast of and use his personal friendship with the AALC chief.

6. The 1975-6 interviews were carried out with a dozen or so union officers, using the Port and Dock Worker Interview Schedule (Appendix 1), the Open-Ended Interview Schedule (Appendix 2) and a Trade Union Officer Interview Schedule (Appendix 3) largely designed to elicit factual information on the unions concerned. As with other survey material used in this study, we can claim that it is suggestive even if we cannot claim that it is fully representative. We were, for example, unable to obtain interviews with the top officers of the R&PT&CSU. Fortunately we have additional materials to compensate for this particular imbalance. The account below draws from the three schedules except where otherwise indicated.

7. In 1982, Okoro was an NPA labour relations officer at Apapa. Proletarian background is evidently no guarantee of loyalty to workers or unions.

8. For a more general account of this type of union leadership during the period when it was at its peak in Nigeria, see Cohen (1974:119-26).

9. Adebola died in 1982. Despite his middle-stratum background and his favourable attitude toward free enterprise he remained within the unions until his death, and was universally honoured by the trade union movement at his funeral.

# Chapter 11
# DOCKWORKER UNIONISM: THOSE WHO WERE BEING PAID COULD NOT FACE THE WORKERS

Here we will be looking at the internal relations of unions in a recently and peripherally unionised industry. We will deal again with the nature of the organisations, with factionalism, and with the national and international organisations that stimulated this. And we will again deal with the nature of the union leaderships and compare their attitudes with those of their followers. Here we will become aware of the problems of even a radical leadership in combining mobilisation with organisation, and in preventing a divergence of interest between even worker leaders and ordinary labourers.

## 11.1. Union structure

Unionisation within this sector is a matter that can be dealt with quite briefly due to the fact that there existed in fact no cardholding membership within any dockworker union, and that no union leadership was able to produce such a thing as a membership list. Even where check-off existed, as with the BSA, the union could provide no membership list, probably depending on Biney's records for this. Even the veteran Okon did not have card-holding membership amongst the regularly-employed dockers at Akere's. The most one can speak of is a 'followership', this being demonstrated by the size of public meetings and the success of strike calls. Within Biney's we know that declared membership rose from 713 in 1968 to 1,495 in 1969 and 'up to 2,000' by 1976. This steady increase was no doubt due to the granting of check-off facilities in 1970. Yet, even though the raising of union membership was only a matter of getting a usually illiterate docker to put his thumbprint on another form before obtaining work, the BSA seemed to have been unable to do this with more than 40 percent. Thus it was at one conference observed that there were people 'who should be members of the union but who had not taken up membership' and others who were members but who 'had not been paying to the union' (BSA Conference Documents 1973).

The lack of any cardholding, and the lack of check-off outside Biney's, meant that dockworker unions

had to rely on dues collection, levies (from individuals or branches), and the dash which workers seem to have always been willing to give on receipt of lump-sum back-pay won by union-led strike action. In the absence of sufficient income from workers, the unions had to turn to outside patrons.

In the case of the BSA we can see the advantage of winning the check-off. The documents show that the 1968 union events were largely financed out of the pockets of its founders, including its consultant and Chief Biney himself. Total receipts since the beginning of 1968 had been just over £N200, and total expenditure just over £N190. Given that the BSA still owed £N50 to various officers, and given the need to 'raise the general funds of the union', it was first agreed that all company staff and headmen should be levied a flat sum of £N2, and all labourers 10 shillings (BSA Conference Documents 1968). At this time a levy of even a flat 10 shillings would have provided it with over £N350. And its monthly dues of two shillings would have provided it with £N8-900 per annum. Despite the check-off it was not to reach this annual income until 1972. Thus in 1969 its income was only £N500 - an average of six or seven shillings per year for members who were supposed to be paying a minimum of 24s. We will see later that there was 'membership' resistance to paying union dues within the company. The Treasurer's Report to the 1969 conference, reveals that there had also been headman resistance to paying the levy voted unanimously at the previous conference. Following check-off, however, income rose to £N900 in 1972. And in 1976 I was informed that the BSA was collecting some N400 monthly.

Before the union obtained the check-off facility it was having difficulty even with its payments to its consultant, Chief Beyioku. In 1968 it had committed itself to a payment of £N420 per annum of him. In 1969 it had had to cut this to £N240 due to its lack of income, this cut apparently being accepted by Beyioku without protest. What is curious is that whilst by 1976 its income had risen by a factor of more than 10, and whilst money wages had risen by a factor of 2.5, its fee to Beyioku had risen by a factor of less than 0.3. Evidently Beyioku's fee from Biney must have been sufficient to compensate him for the little he was receiving from the BSA. However, the higher income level of 1976 was enabling the BSA to pay its Secretary, Assistant Secretary and Clerk monthly allowances of N30, N10 and N8 respectively, with transport and meeting allowances of N10 each. The very considerable difference between a total monthly income of N400 and a current monthly expenditure of N148 was reflected in a very respectable balance, amounting for the period January-October 1976 to N1129 (Interview Notes, November 1976). The check-off facility was thus financing a

leadership which did not represent the general labour, and freeing them even from the previous effort they had had to make to collect dues monthly from the 'members'.

We know that the moderate ADWT&GWU(U) had had very limited success in collecting dues or affiliation fees in the 1960s. Its major source of income just after its foundation had therefore been money from the AALC, variously estimated at £N6,050 to £N10,500. The AALC itself claimed to have contributed to the union a total of £N8,828 and to have believed even after the 1968 debacle that the money had been used 'constructively'. Whether used constructively or not, it was certainly all used up during the six month period following January 1967 (Urhobo Report 1971:49, 55). It looks as if the 'reconstitution' of the ADWT&GWU(U) was also largely dependent on US finance. In 1973 alone, the AALC made four separate payments to the moderates, amounting to a total of N1,227 (Adebiyi Report 1977: 20-21). The AALC was not the only source of external income. Roxy Udogwu, West African representative of the ITF, told me in 1975 that his organisation had paid the costs of the 1973 conference.

In addition to these foreign trade union patrons, the moderates also had at least one local one. Abam admitted that the union president, G.A. Brown, was a contractor (although apparently not a dock labour one), and that

> we are using his house in Lagos as our headquarters, that he is always able to lend us money, and that without him we would never have held together. (Interview Notes, May 1977).

Since the ADWT&GWU(U) made no financial returns to the Registrar, and (at least according to its Internal Auditor) tried to falsify its accounts, we do not know whether it actually managed to collect any money from workers at all, nor what it was doing with such income as it did receive. It may well have been that the union was operating at a fairly modest level in the mid-1970s. Of four top officers interviewed in 1976, only two declared themselves to be paid fulltime officers, one earning N150 and the other N100 per month. The two others declared that they were dependent on their income as tally clerks. A fifth officer was earning N120, but this was coming from his own union, not the moderate leadership.

What of the radicals? One can assume that the NTUC may have subsidised the radical leadership after the 1968 strike although there is no evidence of this. It may have later provided the radicals with free office space at the NTUC school, the Patrice Lumumba Labour Academy, in Yaba. Unfortunately, the radical

leadership was unable in 1975-7 to produce for me any accounts at all. All they could say was that their total income came from the dockworkers themselves. It was admitted that they had received an enormous bonanza following the Udoji strikes, but no actual sum was mentioned. It was said that money was being collected regularly from the various units within Lagos, but again no details were given. The only actual figures mentioned were of N30 received from a leader of the ADU in 1975 and of N40-50 monthly from Balogun of the BSA in 1976. A top radical leader described the collection procedure at Ramallam's as follows:

> Some people will say they are Ramallam union and will bring you some money - N60. Other times they are not bringing good money but we can't prosecute them. (Interview Notes, December 1976).

From interviews we do know a little about the pay of the fulltime officers. Of eight interviewed, four were fulltimers, claiming to receive N70-100 per month. Others received hororaria, sitting fees or minor expenses.

It appears that the financial affairs of the union were in the same sort of disarray as with the previous dockwide unions. Evidence for this is provided by two documents. The first is a leadership attempt to collect funds by writing to a certain employee of Mainland (presumably its contact man there) complaining that no dues had been paid for four or five months and requesting that they be so. To add weight to the demand the letter was copied to the Director of Mainland and to the Apapa Quays police (ADWT&GWU(N) to Aweda, February 17, 1976). The second document is a handwritten minute of an EC meeting of the union in 1976. This indicated considerable dissatisfaction by EC members themselves with the handling of union finance. Thus, the Patron (Olagboshe) stated that once the union had become financially strong (presumably following Udoji), people who had newly joined the union 'started their crooks business over finance'. There were complaints about the Treasurer alone taking decisions on financial questions. There seemed to be no bank account. And even EC members did not seem to be fully informed about union finances.[1] Thus, even the most militant and financially autonomous of the dockworker unions had not by the mid-1970s managed to establish the minimal order and democratic control over its funds that would seem to be necessary for effective continuous organisation and defence of the dockworkers.

## 11.2. Factionalism

Although public or printed accusations of tribalism are rarely to be found during this period, they

were made privately and they did play a role in tensions between or within unions. The original Amalgamation, founded in 1967 was troubled with ethnic conflict, and the Urhobo Report (1971) considered a reason for its collapse the fact that 'tribal sentiments were freely exploited' within it. More recently, one can find a prominent radical (himself an Ibo) saying of the moderate leadership 'They are mostly eastern and they organise on a tribal basis' (Interview Notes, December 1976). And one international union official not only accused Odulana of being a Yoruba tribalist, but explained the lack of success of the moderates in Lagos as partly due to 'the ethnic question, that the leadership is mostly non-Yoruba' (Interview Notes, July 1975).

Using the same methods and terms as with the portworker unions we may now consider the question of ethnicity. We should recall what we know of Lagos dock labour: that pool labour was overwhelmingly Yoruba, quay labour predominantly so, and jetty labour predominantly northern Nigerian or non-Nigerian in composition.

The BSA turns out on analysis to have been overwhelmingly Yoruba in its leadership composition, both as regards its Executive and as regards those attending its 1968 conference. The national leadership of the moderates appears to have been ethnically balanced, both in 1966 and 1973, whilst its Lagos leadership was predominantly Yoruba. The leadership of the radical ADWT&GWU(N) was overwhelmingly Yoruba, whether one considers its national or Lagos leadership. What are we to make of this? It may be best to take each case in turn.

We know that the old BWU was a predominantly Yoruba organisation, even incorporating certain Yoruba cultural elements. And we know that the radical opposition to it in the 1960s was predominantly non-Yoruba. Analysis of the BSA leadership in the 1970s shows that it was significantly more Yoruba in composition than the Biney labour force in general. It was also more Yoruba than any of the sections or departments of the labour force that it might more realistically have claimed to represent. Thus if we take the 200 or so quay headmen, the Biney operations and quay staff, or the total Biney permanent staff, all appear to have been around 60-65 percent Yoruba, whilst the BSA leadership was more like 80-90 percent so. In this case, ethnic particularism would seem consistent with the other particular interests served by the BSA, as well as with Chief Biney's special set of devices for the control of his management and his general labour.

The ethnic composition of the national moderate leadership appeared representative of Nigeria as a

whole, and that of its Lagos leadership was more or less representative of pool and quay labour. The radical accusation that it was in some way 'eastern' is unfounded. The non-Yoruba element in its leadership was traditional. The four manor dockworker leaders in the 1950s and early-1960s (Okon, Abam, Khayam, and Eluma) were all non-Yoruba. It may have been their 'stranger' status that made them both desire and be suitable for leadership roles in the 1960s. Ethnic outsiders have provided leadership to the young working class also in Zaria, Kano and Port Harcourt.[2] But these were not simply ethnic outsiders, they were also largely professional trade unionists or clerks. Of the four leaders mentioned from the 1960s, only Eluma seems to have been recently employed in the industry. Okon had not worked in it for years, and neither Khayam nor Abam had ever worked in it. Furthermore, these men had been (or become) and remained moderate reformists in ideology and strategy. If it is agreed that being an ethnic outsider can be seen as a virtue in a trade union officer, then it seems likely that their rejection by the dockworkers was more for one of the latter reasons than because of their ethnic origins.

The ethnic composition of the radical leadership was weighted toward Yorubas, although not to the extreme degree of the BSA. It had a few non-Yorubas, amongst its top leaders both at national and at Lagos level. Yet, again, we will see that it was not only predominantly Yoruba in composition, it was also more plebian, represented a new generation of leadership, and was more radical. Even if we assume, however, that dockers followed it for these latter reasons rather than for ethnic ones, a question still remains about why the radical union was predominantly Yoruba in leadership. Because of the parallel with the NPA case, it seems better to postpone this issue until we can consider both portworker and dockworker unions together. In the meantime, we should not forget the differences from the NPA case. In the docks, the more experienced and more regularly employed labour was predominantly Yoruba, almost half of quay labour was uneducated, and over half spoke Yoruba as first language at work. Unlike the NPA case, the fact that the radical union leadership consisted largely of native Yoruba speakers provided it with a direct practical advantage in access to the dockers. We can cede this point without accepting any unwritten corollary that a predominantly Yoruba leadership could have sold moderate reformist strategies to the Lagos dockworkers.

Although there would seem to have been sufficient combustible ethnic material in the docks, the fact is that differences between the three main types of union in the industry - the enterprise-based, the moderates and the radicals - were understood and expressed by both leaders and dockers in terms of base, structure

and strategy. Accusations were to the effect that a union was a company union, or dominated by headmen, or that it followed a strategy not in the interests of the dockers. Interpretations in these terms were far more common and significant than those in ethnic terms. Thus, the moderates, and their national and international patrons, accused the radicals of being 'subversives' or communists. Said the ULC following the 1968 strike:

> The docks are vulnerable to subversive activities for various reasons. The Congress role has been 'to build and develop a strong, democratic and responsible union in the docks...because of the strategic position which the docks occupy in the economic life of the nation. The present impasse is the handwork of a handful of disgruntled elements aided and abetted by an ambitious clique outside the docks (Urhobo Report 1971:25).

Said ITF West African Representative, Roxy Udogwu, several years later:

> The attempt to reconstitute the ADWT&GWU in April 1973 was broken up by the Communists... Maybe they are not real Communists, but they make trouble. (Interview Notes).

Meanwhile, the radicals confirmed the communist tag by addressing each other and their followers as 'comrades'. Their accusations against their moderate opponents were of dependence on the contractors or the Ministry of Labour or foreign finance, of weakness, corruption and inefficiency. And they accused the BSA of being run for the personal financial benefit of the headmen, supervisors and foremen. It should be noted that a low level of ethnic interpretation seems to be paired with a high level of political interpretation in terms of strategy or ideology. It should be further noted that whilst the moderates made use of general ideological accusations, the radicals seemed to confine themselves to those having to do with strategy narrowly. Since both the moderate accusations quoted have been from national or international supporters of the ADWT&GWU(U) rather than the union itself, the question must arise of whether such terminology was not stimulated by or addressed to such quarters rather than the dockers themselves.

## 11.3. National and international affiliation[3]

As far as the radicals are concerned, national and international affiliation were evidently of peripheral - and possibly decreasing - importance. The NTUC was evidently important at the time of the 1968 strike, providing a source of both technical expertise and of a

radical ideology to legitimise the militancy of the Olagboshe group. As the 1970s progressed, the NTUC suffered from internal conflicts and its previous 'class' analysis of Nigerian society was replaced by an increasing identification with the various governments' developmentalist domestic and pan-African foreign policies (Waterman 1973: 298-9). What was left was a central national leadership with a certain tradition, a certain terminology, and links with the international communist movement. Through these foreign contacts, the ADWT&GWU(N) was able to send some activists to courses in Eastern Europe. Such courses were of a general ideological nature, having little to do with the practical realities of trade union struggle in a country such as Nigeria, even less to do with dock-workers as such. Few of the radical leaders seem to have attended such courses. Their benefit seems to have been the provision or confirmation of the general communist worldview of those who did attend. For the rest, the radical leadership devised its strategy, tactics and organisational principles and practices from its experience within the dock labour industry itself.

The situation with respect to the moderates was evidently very different. Okon's contacts with moderate-reformist European trade unions ran back to the early-1950s. Abam's contacts with the AALC began in the late-1960s. Furthermore, both the ITF and the AALC had had representatives sitting in Lagos or Accra (ITF) or permanently in Lagos (AALC), in each case paying special attention to dockworkers. National affiliation was of much greater importance to the moderates than it was to the radicals. Whilst in the mid-1970s the influence of the ULC dropped off for reasons analogous to those given for the NTUC, the ULC had been a determining influence before 1968, and in the reconstitution in the 1970s. The ADWT&GWU(U) was largely made what it was by these three organisations.

We may limit our consideration of the ULC to its role with respect to the original Amalgamation. Evidence to Urhobo revealed that the role of this organisation had been far greater than that of the NTUC. Although it was stated at the time of the Report to have had only one dock affiliate, the UTC, it claimed to have had six of the eight dock unions as members in 1964. It admitted that it considered foreign financial aid necessary, declared that it had sought this from American sources, and claimed that 'such aid has never been put into any use inimical to the interests of the Congress or the Nation'. Despite these patriotic claims, the ULC came in for severe criticism from the Inquiry. Not only was there specific criticism of the role played by Acting General Secretary, Odeyemi,[4] in attempting to settle the rift within the Amalgamation, but the ULC in general was considered to have played a

major disruptive and divisory role. It had negotiated the loan with AALC, originally estimating for £N2,090, with only the General Secretary and Executive Secretary to be paid. The sum had then been drastically increased upwards, with a large list of officials. Secondly, it had supplied the defective constitution. Thirdly, it had interfered unconstitutionally in the running of the Amalgamation, appointing a caretaker committee, issuing notices for the annual conferences, and instructing the AALC to cease paying salaries after September 1968.

The crucial and continuing role of the AALC in subsidising the moderate dockworker union leadership has probably been adequately suggested. In his statements to the Urhobo Tribunal (Urhobo Report 1971) the AALC Nigerian representative, George McCray, also made quite clear that the motive of his organisation was to encourage US private investment and build up Nigerian commerce and industry by the creation of developmentalist trade unions.

Despite the evident failure of the AALC's first efforts, of criticism by Adebola in 1969, of the Urhobo Report in 1971, and the total disappearance of the moderate leadership, the Americans did not give up. They now switched from 'direct assistance to unions' to a 'welfare project', evidently meant to make a direct appeal to the dockers themselves. This was the toilet facility mentioned in Chapter 7. Evidently, this project was not negotiated with the non-existent unions. It was agreed upon between the Military Port Commandant and Teddy Gleason, a Vice-President of the AFL-CIO. Nor could the facilities be handed over to the non-existent union. They were, instead, handed over by Irving Brown, Executive Director of the AALC, to the Port Manager, in the presence of portworker unionist, Zudonu, representing the ULC. The six buildings, costing US$55,000, then 'disappeared' from sight so effectively that no one I questioned in 1975-6 knew anything about them. It was only after some two months in the port that I discovered them. They were functioning, but locked, presumably so as to prevent their misuse by anybody but the higher-level NPA key holders. Their main function seems to have been the glorification of the ULC and the self-glorification of the AALC. The AALC Reporter had announced in September 1970 that 'AFL-CIO AND AALC AID LAGOS DOCKWORKERS'. A plaque on the toilet I discovered announed they had been installed 'in cooperation with the ULC'. In practice it seems as if the dockworkers had been used to help the AALC and the ULC.

Perhaps it was recognition of the failure of this project that caused the AALC to switch back again to 'direct assistance'. We know, in any case, that it did feel it worthwhile investing over N1,000 in the recon-

stitution of a leadership which had demonstrated its incapacity but five years earlier. Whilst the activity of the AALC can be explained by its links with the US State Department and the US multinationals, what are we to make of that of the International Transportworkers Federation - old, venerable, and strongly supported by the European social-democratic unions?

The International Transportworkers Federation seems to have been the most constant friend of the moderate dockworker leadership in Nigeria. It had had connections with the dockworkers since the 1950s, and A.E. Okon was a member of its Executive Board from 1962 to 1968. It had a representative in Nigeria during the 1960s. And, since 1970, its Accra-based African representative had been Roxy Udogwu, a Nigerian who made frequent visits to Lagos. For the nature, motives and activities of the ITF we can turn to his evidence to the Adebiyi Tribunal (ITF 1976). The ITF presented itself as an international organisation for all transport workers, set up for cooperation, exchange of information and 'the practice of authentic working class solidarity'. It aimed to embrace all transport unions regardless of colour, nationality, race or creed. It was

> for the defence of democracy and freedom and is opposed to colonialism, totalitarianism, aggression and discrimination in all their forms.

Membership was open to all transport unions, 'provided that such unions subscribe to democratic principles and are independent of any outside control'. Within Nigeria it claimed 17 affiliates, including the ADWT& GWU(U). According to Udogwu, ITF activities in Nigeria

> have been strictly restricted to practical trade unionism...The ITF is not a political organisation and has never indulged in any political activities in Nigeria...At no time did the ITF offer any aid...with strings or on political or ideological considerations...

Udogwu admitted to past financial contributions to Nigerian unions, but declared that

> Once it became certain that these aids had been well utilised by the recipients to achieve self-reliance, they were quickly discontinued.

What it had rather been involved in was practical advice and assistance, particularly in the area of education. The ITF had in the past few years conducted 15 seminars in Nigeria, always in cooperation with, and with the participation of, the government, particularly

the Ministry of Labour. Referring to the matter of trade union division Udogwu claimed that the ITF had been helping to 'unite the mushroom unions on industrial lines as a prelude to unity on the Central Labour level'. So much for the claims of the ITF. What of its achievements?

In the docks of Lagos the ITF had been for a quarter of a century supporting leaders who were incapable of obtaining a popular following. Not once but twice it put its efforts into the creation of an amalgamation and it continually poured in moral support, education and advice, which its supporters were unable to use to the benefit of the dockers. Throughout the years, the base of the moderates had been not so much the dockers themselves as the Ministry, the ULC, at least one friendly contractor and - of course - the AALC and the ITF itself. When the moderates finally gained control of the single legal national dockworkers' union in 1978, this was due to an act of the state, and was followed by widespread unrest amongst the Lagos dockers.

It is evident that the ITF was propagating in West Africa the brand of trade unionism and pattern of labour relations believed in or practised by the moderate-reformist trade unions that dominate it. Hostile to the notion of class struggle, and possessed of paternalist attitudes towards the young transport workers' unions in Africa, it was always prepared to convince post-colonial governments of its 'a-politicism', whilst in practice actively identifying with and reinforcing the development policies of corrupt and reactionary colonial or military regimes. The ITF problem is that it has contradictory aims. In Udogwu's statement to Adebiyi we find both a declaration of liberal-democratic and developmentalist faith, and a programme of practical and non-partisan organisational assistance. The two are contradictory in word and practice. There is a contradiction in word between the denial of 'ideological considerations' for assistance, and the use of such terms as 'free', 'democratic' and 'totalitarian' (which belong to the traditional terminology of liberal ideologists). There is a contradiction in practice because the ideological conditions were used to support one faction against the other, thus creating the major obstacle to the uniting of unions on industrial lines in the docks. The rejection of the effective, popularly-supported, autonomous leadership in the docks meant the denial to it of practical training and advice that it needed. The long-standing opposition to the radicals was evidently due to a traditional hostility to communism that apparently continued in Africa at a time when the ITF has been willing to improve its relations with communist unions in both Eastern and Western Europe. Although the ITF would no doubt like to differentiate itself

from the AFL-CIO, its impact on the Lagos dockworkers was little different. One does not have to assume that the ITF was a tool of the CIA in Nigeria.[5] But one is obliged to recognise that ITF principles and practices within the Nigerian dockworker unions were more in the interests of national and international capital and of the Nigerian state than in those of the dockworkers.

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that whatever the benefits of national and international relations in terms of the provision of moral, financial, technical and educational support, such contacts gave personal or strategy differences an organisational form and an ideological justification. It appears that the less the contact with such external bodies the more a dockwide union was able to respond to dockworker needs. The same lesson seems to have been eventually drawn by H.P. Adebola. Although he had once been deeply involved with the ICFTU and the AALC, and had himself approved the financial assistance to the dockworkers in 1966-8, he eventually came to the following conclusion:

> I am sorry I have to say it, we have to be truthful here. When the Dockers were getting money from George McRay, every month they will get money, you don't find them on the quays. That was why Endeley Olagboshe was able to drive all of them away. Because when he was holding meeting at the Dock, the people who were being paid by George McRay were sitting on big tables in the offices... Those who were being paid could not face the workers, and Olagboshe who was not being paid was addressing the workers at Apapa (Adebiyi Proceedings 1976:27:21).

## 11.4. Union leaders

Given that dockworker unions were little more than their leaderships, the distinction between dockworker union leaders and dockworker unions is evidently even less real than in the case of the portworker organisations. Interviewing them in a standardised manner nonetheless enables us to make comparisons between leaders of different organisations, leaders of one organisation, between the leader and the official position of the organisation, and between leaders and those they claim to be leading. Interviews were carried out with 18 paid or volunteer officers of the BSA, the moderates and the radicals, using the three schedules employed with the portworker leaders. Comparisons will be made with the information on the dockworkers in Chapter 3.

## 11.4.1. Characteristics

As might be expected, the backgrounds of the union leaders varied from those of the dockworkers both in being more urban and in their ethnic composition (to be dealt with just below). The youngest of the leaders was 30, and most of them were aged between 30 and 40. This might make them older than much of jetty labour, but not strikingly different from either quay or pool labour. With an average of eight years' schooling, the leaders were a little better educated than any group of dockers. With an average of 19 years since they entered the industry, the leaders placed themselves amongst the most experienced dockers. When we consider current or previous employment within the industry, we begin to see a difference between leaders of the BSA, the moderates and the radicals. Those of the BSA were all in supervisory grades, the moderates were either long-time professionals or tally clerks, and the radicals were the only ones to have manual or ex-manual workers amongst them - these being either winchmen or securitymen. If we accept as true the statements of the fulltimers amongst the leaders that they were earning N70-150 a month, this would put them well above the pool labour, even if we assume that such a man got a full month's pay of N65. However, it would not put them above the level of the manual workers in the NPA, whom we found to be averaging just under N150 per month. Except for those veteran professional union leaders who had income from other unions, or from patrons, one cannot say that dockworker leaders lived above a Nigerian working-class living standard. This assessment is confirmed by the appearance of the two or three homes of such leaders that I visited. In terms of union experience and training we again find three patterns. The difference was not so much in terms of membership experience (which usually went back 10 or 20 years), as in leadership experience and training. Thus, the BSA leaders had less than 10 years' leadership experience and no trade union training (apart from the NPA Industrial Relations course in December 1976). The moderates mostly had over 15 years' experience and almost all of them had had trade union training - some of them several courses. The radical leaders had both less experience and less training. Interestingly enough, many of this last group mentioned that they had begun their trade union experience in 'Okon's union' or 'Abam's union'.

The non-institutionalised nature of labour relations in the contract labour sector gave rise to a wider variety of leader types than in the NPA. The direction of change is also less certain, given that it is difficult to assess the significance of certain leaders. If, however, we ignore the 'leaders' of the Biney 'union' (a joint creation of Biney himself and his junior supervisory staff) we can identify a certain

pattern and a certain process.

We may begin with the socialist intellectual leaders, even if they made their last appearance during the 1968 dock strike. These were Eskor Toyo, Dr. Mayime Kolagbodi and Baba Omojola (or Oluwide), independent socialists who had taken an interest in dock-worker organisation since the early 1960s (Waterman 1982:Ch.3.). We will see in Chapter 15 that - whatever their hopes or intentions - their role was that of reformist middle-class sympathisers and advisors rather than anything more substantial or revolutionary.

Given the inability of socialist intellectuals to provide the kind of leadership the dockworkers needed at this point of time, they were outpaced by the charismatic worker leader, Endeley Olagboshe. This man had been active in a union of Khayam and Abam in the early 1960s, was a signator of the agreement that ended the 1964 dock strike, and in 1968 led the gang of angry dockers or union activists which raided the offices of the old ADWT&GWU, grabbed its documents and eventually affiliated it with the NTUC.[6] An interview in 1975 provides us with more information. Olagboshe was a Yoruba from Ondo, born in 1937. His father was a farmer and hunter, his eldest brother a product trader. He claimed five or six years education but his standard of literacy was evidently not adequate to obtain him clerical work. He began to work in the docks in the early 1950s, becoming a rigger and winchman. He joined the Nigerian Stevedores and Dockworkers Union (NS&DWU) in 1961 when it was the militant opposition organisation. He claimed to have become its President. He said of Abam that he was 'not effective' and that 'our people let us down in the 1963 dock strike'. Nonetheless, he appears to have stayed with the organisation until 1968, and then to have been one of the organisers who lost their paid positions in the Amalgamation. Olagboshe was a striking figure who customarily appeared in public clad in rubber boots and bearing an umbrella. He had been in jail on more than one occasion, and not only for offences connected with union activities. One arrest for protest action was during a strike that took place in 1972. Olagboshe claimed to have been held in a maximum security prison for 12 months. He further stated that he

> wrote a petition to Gowon. I was taken to see him. He say I contravene the no-strikes decree. I say it was not me that went on strike - the workers. I could not refuse them. I say one man can never go on strike. He warn me to go back and use my office to cooperate with government.

Although military heads of state in Nigeria have been known to have had confidential interviews with leading

unionists, Olagboshe's colleagues discount his story as a product of a too-fertile imagination. It may have been his wild appearance and behaviour that later caused them to follow a practice used with both Imoudu and Adebola by 'promoting' him from President to National Patron.

Having effectively booted Olagboshe upstairs, the ADWT&GWU(N) came under the leadership of the professional outside General Secretary, Bernard Odulana, and of such worker leaders as Reuben Lazarus, its President. Whilst a fulltime union organiser for many years, Odulana cannot simply be characterised as a professional leader. And whilst a worker leader for many years, Lazarus cannot be simply so characterised.

Odulana, who was to lead the radical faction for at least a decade, was a secondary-educated Yoruba, a one-time clerk, who in the 1960s was trained as one of its 'revolutionary cadres' by the NTUC. In an attempt to overcome the trade union entrepreneurship which had long bedevilled the trade union movement, these activists were to have 'dual responsibility', to be 'employed in the services of individual trade unions while at the same time remaining loyal to the Congress' (Waterman 1973). Odulana had in 1968 been at the NTUC-WFTU one-month school at the NTUC's Patrice Lumumba Labour Academy. Later he was to attend courses run by the Czech and East German trade unions. Bearded and bespectacled, he conformed to the popular Nigerian image of the professional communist trade union organiser. Although his loyalty to the NTUC was not questioned, the other NTUC activists tended to look at Odulana askance, considering him less serious and reliable than they themselves. What was noticeable was Odulana's evident preference for the wilder fringes of the trade union movement. Thus, in addition to the dockworkers, he had also been secretary to the Idi-Oro, Mushin and District, Ikeja and District Minibus Drivers Union. Such unions consist of both drivers and owner-drivers. Odulana admitted that they were not industrial unions and that even though the drivers made wage demands on owners, their aims and ambitions were capitalist (Interview Notes, August 1975). Odulana's personal style and preferences apparently suited him to leadership of the dockworkers. The fact that he managed to retain the confidence of the radical dockworkers leaders for ten years suggests that his qualities suited them also. It was only following the success of the moderates in leading the December 1976 strike (Chapter 15) that the worker leaders began to complain to me about the irresponsibility and unreliability of Odulana. At that point of time, the difference between an entrepreneurial and professional type of leadership seemed to be becoming apparent to them, even if they would not have used these words.

Lazarus was an Ibo, in his 40s, raised in Lagos, and having some secondary education. He had been 27 years in the docks as a winchman, joined Okon's union in 1949 and was sent by it to Holland for technical training in the mid-1960s. Lazarus was the President of the ADWT&GWU(N) at the time I interviewed him and was being paid by it as a fulltimer. Whilst previously the only options open to him might have been that of worker or fulltime union leader, the creation of the NCHC offered him a new opportunity. Given his training and his evident leadership qualities, he felt in December 1976 that he had a good opportunity of obtaining a supervisory position within the new company. He declared that there was no danger of being won over to its management, 'since we and they have different ideologies'. He considered it important that union officers should be engaged in dock work and experienced in its techniques. He declared further that even as a supervisor he could and would continue to 'work in the interests of the union'. Lazarus was not the only worker leader of the radicals to have such opportunities before him. In early 1977, the union had actually offered its aid to the Task Force appointed by the Federal Military Government to clear the port congestion. The Task Force took on four such men whom it considered experienced, intelligent and with leadership qualities. These men were regularly employed at around N160 per month, at a time when fulltime officials of the union might have been earning around N100 and pool dockworkers N65 - both irregularly. The Task Force warned these men against exploiting their positions to engage in union activities and promised that if they worked well they would be recommended for supervisory positions up to Grade Level 12 (currently paying around N600 per month). They were, however, warned that they would have to choose between union activity and these posts, since the two were not consistent with each other. The Task Force was satisfied with the experiment and recommended a number of the officers to the NCHC. The union itself felt that its influence and prestige were enhanced by its association with the Task Force. The four union officers could be seen riding the port area daily in Land Rovers, equipped with walkie-talkies, giving orders to contractor and clearing-agency staff. Even if the hope of Lazarus and his friends was in vain, its existence must be considered as a probable explanation for the increasing moderation of the traditional radicals.

Chapter 7 has already provided sufficient information on the background and activities of Okon and Abam to establish these as at least would-be professionals - if in an industry that could provide no base for them. By the mid-1970s both this and other leadership types had been largely replaced by worker leaders. Ironically, the transformation of the structure of the dock labour industry was providing conditions that were

favourable to leadership of either a senior service or a professional type.

11.4.2. Opinions

The considerable differences between the three main dockworker union leaderships existing in the late-1970s make it impossible to consider them as a single category in analysing their aspirations and opinions. Instead, we will use the material in the Open-Ended Interview Schedule (Appendix 2) to examine in turn the attitudes of two BSA, two moderate and two radical union leaders.

Firstly, the two BSA leaders. Both of these were labour supervisors, having worked their way up from the ranks of the dockworkers. Thomas Olushipo, was a primary-educated Yoruba, aged 46, and a veteran Biney trade union officer. Samuel Umeghai, also primary-educated, was a 38-year-old Ibo from Bendel State, and one of the rare non-Yoruba officers on the BSA leadership. What were their aspirations and expectations? Both expected to remain as supervisors with Biney, although one saw petty-trading as a possible alternative. Both expressed pride in their achievements and skills. Asked about ownership and control of dock labour operations, both wanted private ownership to continue with a reduced number of contractors - one of them, of course, being Biney. Both were critical about the operations of the NPA. They had a complex view of the junior supervisors (such as themselves) and management in the industry. Olushipo felt that the former were competent, but that some managements were not so because they practised short-ganging (i.e. operating with less men than officially required). On motivating the workers, both mentioned the necessity of industrial reorganisation either through the Integrated Cargo Handling Scheme or a reduction in the number of contractors, but Umeghai added the necessity for a daily rate of N4 for the dockers. Both believed that there were others who shared the sufferings of the dockers, one mentioning 'anyone on the quays' and including NPA workers, the other mentioning Apapa factory workers. As for enemies, Olushipo mentioned government and NPA, blaming them for bad conditions and pay, Umeghai bad top managements and nobody else. Both of them considered collective action necessary if the poor were to achieve their desires in Nigeria. Umeghai stressed the necessity for trade unionism, 'because there is nobody who can fight for the workers except the union', and Olushipo even mentioned the necessity for strike action!

One need not take this as a mere form of words or as deliberate hypocrisy. During the stormy 1970s they would certainly have witnessed the efficacy of organisation and action amongst dockworkers outside the

company. And we will see in Chapter 15 that in 1975 the BSA was itself involved in the first ever 'official' strike action within Biney's. Most of what the pair said, however, was consistent with their position as self-made men, proud of their skills and achievements, aware of their lack of prospects outside the industry, grateful to and dependent on their employer. One does nonetheless note a continued identification with the labourers from whom they had risen and the poor amongst whom they lived. Whilst supervisors, they were still wage dependent, with conditions and prospects closely related to those of other wage earners in Nigeria.

Now for the two moderate leaders. We will see that whilst Okon's views were consistent with those of his organisation, those of Abam were somewhat contradictory. This will become apparent as soon as we examine their aspirations and expectations. Okon referred to a 1973 cargo operations and labour relations course in the United States, to which he had been sent by the Nigerian government. He felt that this qualified him for an industrial relations job, but in such a place as the NCHC rather than in private industry, since the latter 'usually muzzle good ideas'. However, Okon said that he was also prepared to be a labour attaché if government appointed these. And if either of these failed, he would like to go into politics. Abam expressed the hope of either going into printing (for which he was trained) or politics. If the latter, it

> should be a straight marxist party without mincing any word. In Russia...it is bureaucratically led. I have been out of contact for a long time with the trotskyists who much attracted me with the concept of permanent revolution.

Abam said he would definitely go into politics if the opportunity arose but admitted that 'in Nigeria we are cowards and if military does not hand over it will be difficult to change things ourselves'. Both the moderate leaders were in favour of government supervision over dock labour operations, but <u>without</u> direct ownership and control. We have already cited Abam briefly on nationalisation. It is now worthwhile quoting him more fully. He said

> This really should be done. This was one of our demands in the early 1960s. We had to drop it because the dockers did not understand it and the whole weight of the contractors and shipping companies was against us. The actual job is not done by them. It is done by the dockworkers themselves...So why not government direct? In 1968 we wrote a

> memo on this...Now I will not say this openly because of the lack of understanding amongst dockworkers and also because of the government we have and a lot of interests involved.

Whilst Okon had no criticism of the NPA, Abam accused it of inefficiency and corruption. Both the moderates were critical of the capacities and attitudes of junior supervisors and management within the industry. Okon felt, however, that four of the companies were quite competent: the trouble with the Nigerian private sector was not that it failed to employ competent people but that it failed to listen to them. As for Abam, he felt that with the introduction of the ICHS the companies would improve, since they now all felt the necessity to employ expatriates and experienced supervisors. Both of them felt that better work by the dockers required better organisation and conditions within the industry. Both felt that the dockers had some brothers, Abam mentioning shipping and clearing, factory, commercial and other non-governmental exployees. Of enemies to the dockers Okon mentioned only the contractors. Abam went much further, criticising also the shipping companies, the NPA and the government. On the possibilities of workers achieving their desires, Okon referred to trade union unity, and Abam again went further:

> If power rests with capitalists they will always use it to overcome the trade unions. The workers must be educated to understand that you need to have political power for a permanent solution.

Whereas the two BSA officers had admitted total ignorance of any foreign friends to the Nigerian workers, both Okon and Abam were, of course, well aware of this, Okon mentioning a whole series of ITSs in addition to the ICFTU and AALC.

In introducing the views of this pair it was said that those of Okon were consistent with those of his organisation, whilst those of Abam were not. The inconsistency seems to have lain not so much between the two leaders as within Abam himself. In his practical positions, Abam seemed as moderate as Okon. It was his revolutionary analysis and aspirations that were out of character. In practice it appeared that it was the existence of a military regime that prevented him from being an active socialist, and the hostility of contractors, shipping interest and government that prevented him from advocating nationalisation. If we discount the significance of Abam's socialism, then we are left with two men aspiring to careers outside trade unionism, but currently accepting the Nigerian social, political and economic structures as a given framework within which they were working for incremental change.

The last two leaders are the radicals Bernard Odulana and Reuben Lazarus. How did their views contrast with those of the moderates? To begin with, both wanted to remain in trade unionism, expressing themselves in very similar ways. On industrial organisation, both wanted total nationalisation of dockwork, although both were critical of the NPA. Thus, Odulana said of NPA that it

> should be autonomous and profit oriented. With a bias for profit there will be effective supervision.

His scepticism of NPA capacities led him to desire a separate and independent state corporation for dock operations. Both condemned contractor management and criticised the headmen and junior supervisors, although Odulana excused the corruption of the latter as due to bad pay. On the encouragement of better work, Odulana made the customary suggestions on conditions, but Lazarus (who was currently hoping to obtain a supervisory position within the NCHC) said,

> Government guidelines must be applied first. Then we will kick out anyone who doesn't work. If [workers] say it's 'government job', we will send them home for one or two weeks. Once government does what is right, you should obey.

Both the radicals had a problematic view of those who were in the same position as the dockers. According to Odulana,

> All portworkers <u>should</u> be called dockworkers ...But NPA workers are under a different employer. They have a sense of security. They <u>express</u> solidarity but they don't take it.

Lazarus had a greater feeling of the isolation of dockers:

> The dockworker is suffering the most...Nobody is fighting for their cry. Dockworkers fight for themselves. It is very common in our country and everyone fight for themselves...

On the dockworkers' enemies, their views agreed with those of Abam. So did they seem to on achieving the needs of the poor in Nigeria, Odulana stating that this would be

> by organising into formidable trade unions. Principally, if the country goes socialist. Under the present system, by organisation. Then by participation in a political movement whose aim is to achieve socialism.

In answer to another question, however, Lazarus had stressed the value of strike action: 'Immediately we go on strike, everyone has sympathy with us'. Dealing with friends abroad, Odulana mentioned the Transport Trade Union International (TUI) of the WFTU. Lazarus seemed to be unaware of this, although he considered the unions in East and West to be supporters of Nigerian workers in some manner. Perhaps for this reason he would have liked to see the union affiliated to both the East and West.

One does notice certain differences between the pair. These possibly reflect the differences between the professional NTUC cadre, Odulana, and the working unionist that Lazarus, had for so long been. For the rest, their views appear to be consistent with the somewhat ambiguous radicalism of their organisation. Thus Lazarus was able to adopt a managerial view on industrial discipline, Odulana a technocratic one on the solution to the ills of public enterprise. And whilst their common favouring of nationalisation could be explained in terms of personal self-interest, the fact is that it would have guaranteed the dockers what they most wanted too.

## 11.5. Union followers

### 11.5.1. Characteristics

In dealing with the organisational characteristics and the attitudes of dockworkers, it is necessary to recall that we are covering only the more-experienced workers who do know something about the unions or union leaders. Evidence on the organisational characteristics of these more-experienced workers is from the Port and Dock Worker Survey (Appendix 1). Union membership was claimed by just over 60 percent of those sampled, with 90 percent of these 'members' claiming to pay dues. Earlier evidence on union finance suggests that we cannot take these claims to mean more than irregular donations. The real nature of union attachment is indicated by the inability of one-quarter of the 'members' to name their union. Similarly, 30 percent of those claiming membership could not name a union officer. And over half did not know whether or not their secretary was paid. The general image of the ignorant or disinterested docker is complicated when we consider activity. Over one-half of the dockers had attended a meeting in 1975, one-quarter having attended more than 10 meetings. Moreover, 80 percent of the dockers questioned had had strike experience, one-quarter claiming to have struck five or more times. The dockers surveyed come over as being experienced and active in protest action, but as having a low level of participation in, or commitment to, 'their' unions.

11.5.2. Opinions

Using the Open-Ended Interview Schedule employed with the leaders (Appendix 2), interviews were carried out with 11 labourers working for one of three major contractors. These men were earning N2.62-2.80 per day and working 15-20 days a month. A number were illiterate, the others having a few years of primary education. Most of them, including those who said they were not union members, had taken part in the Udoji strike a few months previously.

What, firstly, were their aspirations? The dockworkers aspired mostly to self-employment as petty-traders, drivers or contractors. A few aspired to advancement within the industry - and two to medicine or journalism! Those aspiring to self-employment were largely confident about achieving their aim within five years, though some put their faith in God's will. Even an aspirant tally clerk was pessimistic:

> I have the experience to be a marker and tally clerk but no one introduces me to anyone who matters...I have no hope because I have no godfather [patron. PW].

The dockers thought overwhelmingly that the industry should be taken over, either by NPA, or government, or government and unions. Said one:

> All I want is government to take it over - hand it over to the unions. Because they are fighting for us mekunu [common people. PW]. All of us know about the job but contractors do not allow us to use our brains. They don't handle trucks, only us labourers. It would be good with government. Government and unions should work together.

A few, however, thought contractors should remain in control:

> I like them to continue controlling...This is because they employ me too and by their help I can have the money for my future business of the coming five years...the more contracts government give to contractors the more contractors give me job and I will be rich.

What did they think of the present nature of the NPA? Was this considered satisfactory? The answer was overwhelmingly favourable. Attitudes toward both junior supervisors and senior management were overwhelmingly positive. Was it thought possible to get workers to work better in the industry? They were divided. The majority, however, stressed the need for improved pay, conditions and work organisation. Said

one:

> They should provide us with amenities. If we work, we sweat. If we see water to drink and bath we will be happy. If we are working every day we will be happier. We should [be paid] when they book us whether rain or no rain.

Did they feel they had any brothers in arms? The dockers were overwhelming negative. Said one:

> At present there is no much brothers in arm because most of them do not care for others.

A few referred to the union and to government, but the latter was mentioned in terms of hope rather than actuality.

If the workers did not feel that they had friends, did they feel that they had enemies? They divided into two equal groups, one of which could identify no collective enemy (although personal ones were mentioned) and the other of which mentioned contractors. The most explicit statement here was as follows:

> The contractors. NPA is helping them. They connive. Government is in collaboration with contractors. They dupe us together.

On the question of the poor achieving their desires, half put their trust jointly in government and union/worker protest:

> There is no way we can come out to get power except government come to help. We have no power over government but government has power over us. We can protest against the contractors. When we protest, when we strike, we are only inviting government [to act].

Among the other half there were those who simply did not know and others who either believed in hard work or in the impossibility of the poor achieving their desires:

> ...we cannot get what we want at every minute. This is because we have no power and will not have.

The final question was on foreign friends. Most of them knew of none. One or two mentioned individual countries - Russia, Britain, the USA. Others identified foreign businessmen.

> Europeans and Indians like those who esta-

> blished textile industry at...Oyigbo. They always want to keep peace with them without trouble.

11.5.3. Discussion

Let us try to summarise the material on leaders and followers. It appears as if dockworkers aspired to petty-capitalist self-employment, a status for which they had high expectations. They condemned the existing private ownership of the industry and wished to see it taken over by the state or the state and unions. They saw the structure of NPA as satisfactory, probably as desirable. Whilst possibly critical of supervisors and managers, they did not see themselves opposed to them. They saw improved work performance as requiring improved pay and conditions and the re-organisation of work. If not fatalistic or individualistic in their views on achieving the desires of the labouring poor, they believed in a combination of collective action and government assistance. This struggle was quite likely to be seen as taking place against a specific common enemy - the contractors - but it was not seen as a struggle in which the docker had outside support. If they thought of foreign supporters at all, it was in terms of foreign governments, investors or traders.

We have to recognise both the extent of this worker consciousness and the limitations on it. Positive consciousness of their situation as wage earners was expressed in their opposition to their immediate exploiters, in their demand for nationalisation, and in a certain recognition of the necessity for collective action if they were to achieve their demands. Limits to such a consciousness are revealed in their petty-capitalist aspirations, feelings of isolation, belief in individual self-help, dependence on the rich and powerful (nationally and internationally).

The question now is of how the values of the three leaderships related to this contradictory set of worker values. Evidently, each of the three shared certain values or aspirations with the workers. Evidently they also had some which differed. Given that the leaders were in a position to influence the workers, it may be most important to consider where their ideas differed, where they were 'leading' the workers to. First, the BSA leaders. Let us consider their ideas on worker organisation and action as sincere. Let us also accept that they wished to see the workers enjoying better conditions. Yet we note that both in their personal aspirations and in their faith in Biney ownership, they were leading the workers to identify with a particular capitalist, and emphasising individual mobility within his company. Secondly, the moderates. Discounting Abam's socialism (which had not been publicly propounded for more than 10 years), we find the signifi-

cant differences with the dockworkers to lie in their personal apsirations to political, managerial or diplomatic employ, in their faith in private ownership, and in their belief in the existence of both local and foreign friends or supporters of the dockworkers. This is evidently a broader view of society than that of the BSA leaders. But we must note that it was also more conservative than the dockworker view in arguing against nationalisation. Moreover, their 'internationalism' was based on the value to themselves of a relationship with one part of the international trade union movement. Where they would seem to have been leading the workers is toward a 'modernised' industry and labour relations compatible with the development of private capital nationally and internationally. Thirdly, the radicals. They would seem to have been moving the workers away from their feelings of dependency on the rich and powerful. In their personal identification with trade unionism, in their practical recognition that progress of the dockworkers depended on dockworker action alone, in their nationalisation demand, in the aspiration of Lazarus for full international working-class solidarity, and in their common recognition of the necessity for a socialist political movement, they would seem to have been leading the dockers toward greater self-consciousness and self-confidence. Yet we must not forget the limitations on this radicalism, nor the questions we raised earlier about the problems of their organisation.

Having now examined the attitudes of the radical leaders and their followers more closely, it may be possible to suggest answers to some crucial questions. Were these leaders not, in some ways, also too close in their attitudes to the dockers? They did seem to share the faith of their followers in the goodwill of government and in state action as a solution to dockworker problems. Was their communist ideology of any practical value? All they were doing in practice was to press energetically for the traditional reformist solutions to dockworker problems. Their longterm socialist aspiration was not translated into effective organisational and consciousness-raising work amongst their followers. This answers the last question also. It is evident both from the low commitment to and participation in the unions that the dockworkers were not conscious of the need for organisation in addition to action. This is confirmed by the failure of the dockers to make any mention of the necessity for strong and powerful trade unions. It was this failure of the radicals that prevented them (as we will see in Chapter 15) from responding to the dockworker sentiment in favour of a strike in late 1976 or, alternatively, of preventing the moderates from leading such a strike.

## 11.6. Summary

As in the summary to the last chapter, we may now

tie in the conclusions above with the problem of factionalism. It is evident that we are dealing here with a situation in which workers are acutely aware of their immediate oppressors and in which the form of collective organisation necessary to deal with these is barely existent and hardly recognised. The volatility of the dockworkers, and their difficulties in self-organisation, made them a continuing object of interest to the Nigerian and international labour movements - as well as to certain reform-minded contractors and to the Nigerian state. In general, these movements were so dependent (at least ideologically) on national and international capitalism as to be incapable of coming to terms with the attitdes and capacities of the workers themselves. They accepted explanations of organisational weakness and division in terms of ethnicity or ideology. They thus stimulated and subsidised such divisions. But, given the crudity of dockworker exploitation, the obviousness of their organisational needs, and the self-evident nature of their immediate demands, such efforts booked little success.

The NTUC cadre, Odulana, evidently established another sort of relationship by collaborating with, and possibly helping to build, a worker leadership with the necessary structural basis, minimal reform programme, personal courage (or bravado) and strategy. If one had been looking at it in 1973-4 one could have easily assumed that there was developing a plebian worker leadership, with its roots amongst the dockers, and which had both surpassed ethnic factionalism and turned away from the dubious attractions of ideological factionalism dangled by national and international patrons. But, when one takes into account the experience of 1975-6, one realises that this kind of identification with the dockworkers was not enough. The success of the ADWT&GWU(N) and the promises attendent on this success (the ICHS and the NCHC) opened up new perspectives for trade unionism as an organisational form and for trade union leaders as a distinct social category. Whilst still largely sharing the attitudes and aspirations of at least the more regularly-employed dockworkers, the radical leaders were now faced with very different personal possibilities. Those with a <u>possibility</u> of being paid were also having problems in facing the workers.

NOTES

1. The handwritten minute is reproduced in full here not only because of the insight it gives into the administration of the union, but because it is the <u>only</u> EC minute available. Moreover, it draws attention to the existence of an 'adviser' or 'advisers' (of whom, unfortunately, we know nothing more). The existence of such a person (or

persons) suggests that the union had not escaped from the dependence on outside expertise that we find with the BSA and with moderate-reformist unions in the cargo-handling industry. The note reads as follows:

> Advisers like know, how much we have in the account now? The Committee must continue their jobs over the [illegible] on the account. The Patron spoke over the past events, and after the union became financially strong and people who newly joint the unions started their crooks business over the finance. Both pay officials and collectors to go together and collect money together. By adviser. Come back in two weeks time... a treasurer alone is not capable of taking self decisions of his own on many issues of Finance. Joint current account. And great shame to you union. (1) To know how much the treasurer has hand. Who soever that is possession of our union money, we like to know. Joint account to be opened between the 2nd and the 5th July 1976. B. Odulana said that he used the treasurer to give an account. G. Sect. still pressed much to know about the account on the finance. Advisers advises that nobody should keep money in hand of the treasurer should not more than impress account. We need to open account for account sake.

2. Hausa union officers in Zaria, Northern Nigeria, told me in 1970 of their regret that their 'most effective leader', an Ibo, had fled during the 1966 pogroms. Paul Lubeck was during the same period told that the only trade union organiser trusted by Kano factory workers was an Ibo (Lubeck 1975b:144). Wolpe deals with an analogous phenomenon in Port Harcourt at the time of the 1964 General Strike. In a predominantly Ibo city, dominated by Ibo politicians, the Strike Management Committee contained six non-Ibo to four Ibo. He argues:

> For non-Ibos...trade unionism had become an organisational vehicle to protest their exclusion from the political establishment...

Further:

> Non-Ibos were in a far better position than their Ibo trade union brethren to lead a public protest against a politi-

> cal establishment that was, after all, largely Ibo in composition. Not constrained by ties of blood and community, or by considerations of vested interest, non-Ibos were freer to lead and to speak out on matters of common concern to both Ibo and non-Ibo workers. (Wolpe 1975: 182, 1986).

3. For a fuller treatment of the foreign influence on Lagos dockworker unionism from the 1950s to the 1970s, see Waterman (1980c).

4. Chief E.A.O. Odeyemi was later to be even more severely criticised by a tribunal. In addition to his ULC post, he was General Secretary of the Nigerian Motor Drivers and Allied Transport Workers Union. With the aid of the ITF this had in 1962 set up a Motor Drivers Training School. From 1965, both finance and technical expertise for the school were provided by the AALC. In 1974 the Training School was still receiving aid of US$6,000 from the AALC and an additional N15,000 from the Nigerian Industrial Training Fund. By this time the operation was formally in the hands of the Motor Union, but in practice in those of Odeyemi. In 1974 the school and the land it stood on were transferred to Chief Odeyemi and his heirs. The Adebiyi Tribunal declared that such dealings 'raise grave doubts about the integrity of Chief Odeyemi', and recommended he be banned from further union office (Adebiyi Report 1977: 24-5).

5. The ITF has been named as an instrument of the CIA in Latin America. Former CIA agent Philip Agee declares that the various International Trade Secretariats (ITSs) are often more effective and appropriate for CIA influence than the ICFTU structure in Latin America. He declares that Jack Otero, a US transport union leader and ITF representative in Latin America, was a CIA 'contract labour agent' there at one time. He gives examples of efforts made to control Latin American transport unions in the interests of the US state (Agee 1975:76,306,358,384). In 1978 Otero was a Vice-President of the ITF. In respect to the Nigerian dock unions, also, the US trade unions can operate either directly, through the AALC, or indirectly, through the ITF. In fact, the same individual has played a leading role in both bodies. Teddy Gleason, who in 1970 made the toilet deal with the Nigerian government on behalf fo the AALC, was in 1974 elected a Vice-President of the ITF. One should beware of conspiracy theories: neither the CIA nor the US trade unions control the ITF. But the ITF is open to such

influences because it shares the belief that workers in the third world 'face similar problems today to those which confronted workers half a century ago in the more industrialised nations', and that the appropriate model is that of 'countries where there is a long-established tradition of democratic trade unionism and industrial relations' (ITF 1975:4). The problem is that as a result of policies emanating from the dominant states and multinationals, there are less and less liberal regimes in the third world. The ITF may help trade union struggle against racist or fascist regimes in Portugal, Chile or South Africa. But liberal regimes remain in existence only as long as the trade unions are 'reasonable'. If the working class and other parts of the poor become 'dangerous' then we get coups or states of emergency, as in Tunisia, Chile, or Thailand. The ITF favours the 'reasonable' unions, and - in Latin America, for example - opposes movements with revolutionary 'ideologies which do not answer the continent's needs' (ITF Activities Report 1977: 65). So does the CIA. If the ITF was to effectively separate itself from such influences, it would have to be open to those trade unions that are taking appropriate and effective action against capitalist exploitation and state repression, whether their ideologies and methods were revolutionary or not.

6. The stormy nature of dockworker unionism and the key role played by Olagboshe in the events of 1968-9 come out clearly in the Urhobo Report (1971). This is how Fakoya, one of the moderates, reported the attack on the offices of the amalgamation:

> Suddenly Endeley Olagboshe and a group of men about 50 strong whom we know in the docks as smugglers stormed into the Secretariat and seized all the keys... They ordered the officers present to assemble in the conference room under physical violence...One of their leaders, late Fatai Ayinde, read out a resolution purported to have been passed by the dockers in Lagos with so many charges against the National Officers... They did not allow the officers to speak...They seized the nominal roll, the Union's certificate, and started to ransack the office.

Whilst Fakoya described the attackers as smugglers others preferred to term them 'canoe boys' or 'toughs'. F. Balogun, President of the ADWT&GWU, claimed that he had seen £N40 change hands and

that each of the attackers had received £N5. Meanwhile, the critics of Khayam were claiming (in the words of A.E. Okon) that 'The thugs Sidi Khayam used to harass others turned against him'.

# Chapter 12
# ANALYSIS: CAPITAL AND STATE ARE ALSO WITHIN THE UNIONS

Let us first of all recall what has been established in the analysis of Parts I and II. In Part I it was argued that there was in neither of our two sectors an unambiguous proletarian-capitalist opposition. It was further asserted that each of the two labour forces was itself significantly divided by fraction, segment and stratum. Given the relatively close relationship, finally, between the two labourer types, the question was raised of whether the division between them was really the most significant amongst the Lagos port workers. Part II furthered this line of argument. Having recognised the nature of the division between the two types of labour force, it considered the implications of such a division for the more- and less-proletarianised workers respectively. The two final paragraphs of Chapter 8 again reveal the common problems for both worker types. The first conclusion was that there is no 'real' working class in Nigeria from which either the more- or less-proletarianised workers are to be differentiated; there was no proletarian vanguard (no economically-determined or 'natural' vanguard) that other workers had to follow. One could not, in other words, assume on the basis of extent-of-proletarianisation or extent-of-deprivation a certain level of class consciousness. In so far, indeed, as it was possible to identify the relationship between group experience and radicalism, it was also possible to identify the limitations to such radicalism in the group experience. The second conclusion had to do with the relationship between group particularism and union organisation and action. Whilst it was argued that in the Lagos Port at this particular period the unions had been overcoming divisions amongst workers, it was also recognised that the union form permitted their continuation. The more general question of the relationship between the union form and worker division was left open.

Part III provides material for the consideration of this problem. In the theoretical introduction, Chapter 9, we have spoken about relations running across, up and down the unions. In this analysis it would seem to make sense to deal in turn with relations

between workers and leaders, with structure and factionalism, and finally with external affiliation. This is to change the order of presentation in Chapter 10 and 11, and also the 'direction' of the relations to be analysed. We will, therefore, be looking in turn at relations running down from, across, and up from, the Lagos Port union leaderships. The weight of the analysis, moreover, will now shift from differences between the two sectors to differences within both. It is necessary to make clear that the problems of the workers would not be solved simply by the establishment of a united port and dockworker organisation with a common radical strategy toward an enemy seen solely as outside and above the trade union movements.

Analysis will draw primarily from Chapter 9, supplemented where necessary by material from earlier chapters.

## 12.1. The worker-leader relationship

Before dealing with the relationship between leaders and workers we have to deal with each separately. We will start with the workers. Here it is possible to identify attitudes specific to each category and those common to both. What we are here distinguishing is between two narrow (portworker, dockworker) and one broader (cargo-handling worker) consciousnesses. Let us first consider the attitudes specific to the two categories. These can be best set out as follows:

| Attitude | Portworker | Dockworker |
|---|---|---|
| Aspired status | Salaried | Petty-ownership |
| Fatalism | Low | High |
| Militancy | Low | High |
| Union consciousness | High | Low |
| Hostility toward | Supervisor | Owner |

What might seem to be not only conflicting but internally inconsistent sets of attitudes become at least comprehensible when we consider the respective backgrounds, social networks, and precise class relations within which they are placed. We know from Chapter 3 already of the different backgrounds and networks of port and dockworkers, with the first being largely incorporated into an urban, wage-earning (and white-collar) milieu, the latter into a rural and petty-entrepreneurial one. We also know of the significant differences between the state and capitalist sectors. If we recall Figure 9.1 we can see this expressed in terms of the relations of each worker type to a very specific and quite distinct intermediate category.

The portworker, it should be recalled, is employed with lifetime security in a non-capitalist enterprise which he has little or no desire to abandon. His personal advancement would be into the intermediate salaried strata - either within or outside NPA. There is no capitalist exploiter, so he feels his sufferings in terms of the hierarchy at the bottom of which he finds himself. The combination of low fatalism, low militancy and high union consciousness (all relative to the dockworker) suggests a 'middle-class oriented' wage earner, taking purposeful group action to further his wage and job interest without endangering either. If it was not for the attitudes we will later see to be shared with the dockworker, he would seem to be an almost ideal wage-earner - from a capitalist or statist point of view.

As for the dockworker, he is casually employed in a capitalist enterprise offering low wages and no security. He exists between, or circulates between, wage work and self-employment, the latter offering at least autonomy and the possibility of wealth. He is in a small-capitalist enterprise, one run by a crudely-exploitative boss, whose presence - and conspicuous wealth - identify him as the exploiter. The first-line supervisors are people like himself, to some extent chosen - or accepted - by the worker, and who also play a group-coordinator role. The combination of fatalism and militancy is far from contradictory, being part of a well-known syndrome amongst those in urban or rural self-employment. Meszaros (Chapter 9 above) links petty-bourgeois impotence and anarchism - the latter being often itself linked with insurrection. And, as with all those in the petty-commodity sector, it is difficult (though not impossible) for these workers to translate rebelliousness into organisational terms. Such attitudes may provide for the necessary fervour in a revolutionary situation but be the despair of organisers before one has arisen or after it has subsided. However, these are only the points at which dockworker attitudes differ from portworker ones. We now have to see where they coincided.

The points at which there is such a coincidence seem to be the following: 1) a combination of hostility to the immediate exploiter/oppressor with dependency on the state; 2) a general non-consciousness of belonging to a national - far less an international - working class; 3) a combination of egalitarianism, individualism and deference. The third element is already familiar from the findings of earlier research on Nigerian workers reported in Chapter 1. This particular complex can be understood in terms of the rural background of most Lagos Port workers. Here we have a relatively classless rural community, yet one in which competition and commercialism exist, and in which deference is paid to the 'big men'. This is not to say

that it is solely a rural hangover. We have seen that the pattern of class formation in Nigeria has not yet crystalised, that there is still much social mobility, and that many of the 'big men' in business and bureaucracy have humble origins. The particular process of peripheral capitalist industrialisation in West Africa also helps us understand the first point. The workers experience exploitation and oppression in the workplace, but do not necessarily see these as local expressions of a total social order. Because, at the national level, the dominating social force is not a landed aristocracy or industrial bourgeoisie, but the state. And the state not only provides much - secure - employment but appears as a source of communal welfare. Point 2, the non-consciousness of class belonging, is the other side of this coin. Actually the situation is even worse, since the port and dockworkers showed little awareness of commonality with each other.

If we consider the complex of common attitudes in terms of levels of worker consciousness, then we are here looking at what Meszaros would call a partial group with a status consciousness. We are obviously light-years away from 'recognition of the objective socio-historical prevalence of the strategic world perspectives of the working class' (Chapter 9 above). However, this status consciousness is a worker consciousness, and permits the linkage of port with dockworker interests, as well as the linkage of these with other Nigerian workers. It is also something more than only a worker consciousness, since most of the attitudes are, as we have seen, shared with the urban and rural poor more generally. The constraint on this set of attitudes for sustained common action would seem to be that it is simply a set of attitudes, lacking systematic articulation in the form of an ideology. The development or spreading of such ideologies is a possible function of labour leadership, and it is to such leadership that we will now turn.

In terms of attitudes it has been said of both port and dockworker leaders that they stood too close to their members. This might seem a curious comment or criticism. Particularly when the introduction to Part III has stressed the necessity for ending the division between thinkers and doers within the labour movement. We do certainly see the disappearance of both social-democratic and marxist ideologists amongst the leaders. But the abandonment of irrelevant ideologies seems to have implied the abandonment of any attempt by the leaders to present their followers with some more-sophisticated and integrated (radical-democratic?) worldview than that of the workers themselves. Only the radical dockworker leaders seemed to have been offering some kind of intellectual leadership. But we have seen the qualifications placed on their radicalism by their position as mediators between the workers and

management or state. The aspirations of most of the leaders seem explicable in terms of this intermediate economic, status or power position. Indeed, it would seem we could explain their aspirations and ideas in terms of Figure 9.1, with leaders as intermediate categories between working class and management, or working class and petty-bourgeoisie. Only in their positive identification with the trade unions and stress on the necessity of political power for labour can we see the union leaders giving coherence and direction to the disparate dissatisfactions, aspirations and desires of the workers. But then we have to take into account the divergences between the different leaderships, a matter to which we must now turn.

In an initial distinction between leader types within Lagos Port (Chapters 10 and 11) I identified and named six, according to criteria of social position and motivation or aspiration. The six types have mostly been previously identified in work on Nigeria. They are, again, 1) the worker leader (Peace 1979:116-34; Smock 1969:139-46), volunteer or paid, but not yet professionalised; 2) the entrepreneur (Cohen 1974:119-26), with his portfolio of secretaryships, secondary-educated or an ex-clerk, selling his expertise and treating organising as a business operation; 3) the intellectual (Waterman 1982: Section 3.1.7), usually an academic, the bearer of information, ideas and analytical capacities; 4) the cadre (Waterman 1973), trained and possibly paid by the communist NTUC, to which primary loyalty was owed, and supposed to both organise and educate the workers; 5) the professional, of any background, considering unionism as a career, and demonstrating primarily administrative, bargaining and legal capacities; 6) the senior staff leader, with a similar status, capacities and skills to those of management or the ministerial or legal officials with whom he deals. Dockworker unionism showed not only a different mix of types from portworker unionism, but also a broader range. And more hybrids. In both cases, however, we note a movement in the direction of the professional and/or senior staff type leader.

If we are concerned with the leader/follower relationship, then we need to consider both the difference in pattern and the common direction of change. For both we need to refer back to concepts in Chapter 5. It appears that a situation in which a simple control strategy is being exercised by management over barely proletarianised workers does not only give rise to frequent strikes but also provides an opening or attraction for a broad range of would-be leaders, including socialist intellectuals and communist cadres. What of the portworker leaders? In Chapter 8 it was suggested that the NPA seemed to combine bureaucratic control with a traditional proletariat. We therefore find unions accepted by management, and engaged in

wage, security and pensions negotiations (although the behaviour suggested by Edwards for the 'middle layer' worker is not totally absent). In the NPA situation, socialist intellectuals and communist cadres had never made a showing, the charismatic worker leader (Michael Imoudu in the 1950s-60s) had booked little success, and the entrepreneurs (amonst whom Fagbenro Beyioku could be counted) had decreasing impact. At the national level, Nigeria was in an uncertain phase between a liberal and a corporativist labour control strategy. This meant that unionisation was officially permitted and encouraged whilst not being emptied of meaning for the workers. The tendency toward leadership professionalisation was a result.

How does this pattern and process relate to the typology of style or appeal set out in Chapter 9? There, adapting Post's typology, we identified the exemplary, charismatic, trickster, status and educator types. There is some coincidence between the two typologies, insofar as we can see (or have shown) a relationship between the charismatic and the worker leader, the educator and the socialist intellectual, the trickster and the entrepreneur, the status and the professional/senior staff type. However, we have in the port no exemplary leader, nor do we find any evolutionary trend toward the socialist educator or intellectual. Rather do we see the disappearance or marginalisation of these (as well as of charismatic and trickster types) with time. This is not to suggest some iron law of bureaucratisation. But there is clearly a relationship between leadership types and particular phases of industrialisation, labour control strategy and working-class self-identification. The time for exemplary, charismatic and socialist intellectual leadership in Nigeria may come again.

We should not assume that the process of professionalisation necessarily implies an increasing distance of leaders from workers. Nor a simple switch of patrons by the workers. The evolution which did occur, indeed, seems to have been accompanied by a mobilisation of the workers and by the creation of a broad base of volunteer worker leaders. However, we cannot conversely assume that even such a mobilisation and broadening implied a signficant democratisation, a matter we must consider again below. Of the six types I identify, five are possessors of special skills or qualities which place them in a position of superiority to the worker, thus providing the structural basis for patron-client relations. Only the worker leader does not, but he is at this phase in the development of Nigerian capitalism being excluded from top leadership or converted into something else. If this is the situation, should not the future problem be seen as that of spreading the necessary skills or qualities amongst the workers, of ending the specialised function of leadership over and above them?

## 12.2. Structure and factionalism

In the NPA unions we have members, accounts and conferences. In the dockworker unions we have followers, collections and meetings. This, in a nutshell is the difference in the organisational structure of the two types. The dockworker union exception - the BSA with its forced check-off and industrial relations consultant - only proves the general rule. The difference is clearly between recognised unions oriented towards collective bargaining and unrecognised unions mobilising for recognition. The common process was the clear movement toward a single, united and dynamic union in each sector. Whilst this again suggests a coming together of leaders and followers, we must recall 1) that the state was also in favour of industrial (or, in this case, half-industrial) unions, and 2) that big industrial unions are not necessarily more democratic than small non-industrial ones.

In the initial theoretical discussion of trade union structure a process was suggested of increasing bureaucratisation as unions gain in size and recognition. There is a movement from primitive democracy to popular bossdom, from the parttime to the fulltime leader, from the socially-transformatory to the collective-bargaining union. Worker victories are turned into capitalist instruments, unions are bureaucratised, professionalised, 'politicalised' and incorporated. The only countervailing force is the self-activity of the rank-and-file. This would seem to be a sufficient framework for understanding our case. However, it is necessary to recall that Nigeria never had the extensive artisan stratum which provided the base of powerful craft unions and also of early anti-capitalist protest. In place of volunteer artisan leaders, Nigeria - and the port - had semi-professional or middle-stratum leaders. And in place of anti-capitalist it had anti-imperialist unionism. It is therefore difficult to consider the transition to the present pattern as a fall from grace. We have now, however, to take into account not so much divisions between workers and leaders on the vertical axis as between groups of both workers and leaders on the horizontal one.

The main form of factionalism amongst the unions in Lagos Port was the ethnic one. And the major instance was almost identical in both halves of the industry. This is quite remarkable given the previously noted differences between labour force, control strategy and union structure. The case in mind is that of the two radical unions, the R&PT&CSU and the ADWT&GWU(N). In each case the rising radical leadership was predominantly Yoruba, the declining moderates predominantly non-Yoruba, and the ethnic card was being played by the multi-ethnic moderates. Possible explan-

ations have already been suggested for a given ethnic predominance in union leadership: it could have reflected a certain ethnic balance in membership, or the early role of ethnic stranger leaders. The rise of Yoruba leaderships could also have been due to the departure of Ibo workers and leaders during the Civil War. But what of the common radicalism of two predominantly Yoruba leaderships of such different ideological and political backgrounds as those of Adebola and Odulana? We have, again, already suggested that the Yoruba leaderships may have been less incorporated into a western, christian and liberal culture and therefore more capable of a populist response to the rising dissatisfaction of the workers. We have seen that it would have been impossible for Adebola to have had a wide appeal to the NPA workers if he had played the ethnic card. And whilst it might have been possible for Odulana, there is no convincing evidence that he did. Given the multi-ethnic nature of each workforce, indeed, any ethnic appeal could in this situation only have been an obstacle to class consciousness and unity. Consequently, it was the conservative forces within the unions that made most use of it. But - because they were liberals and because they were multi-ethnic in composition - they could hardly make a tribalist appeal. Instead, they tried to prevent the radicals from having a universal appeal by labelling them as tribalist.

It is notable that these more conservative leaders grasped at ethnicity as the previously predominant form of factionalism - grades and trades - declined in appeal. Conversely, where the conservative Yoruba-dominated leadership of the BSA still controlled its membership as a company-based faction, it had no need to make ethnic appeals or accusations. As for Okon, he used ethnic accusation to defend his company-based faction from the radical ADWT&GWU(N). And he used a group-self-interest appeal to defend it from his fellow moderates in the ADWT&GWU(U).

Interesting is the different extent of ethnic appeal and explanation in each of our two wage-labour sectors. The 'advanced' NPA unions showed in this period much more evidence of ethnic factionalism than the 'backward' or 'undeveloped' dockworker unions. We have seen that amongst dockworker unions differences were more commonly expressed in terms of organisational structure and union strategy than in those of ethnicity. Yet, at earlier periods, the reverse seems to have been true. In the 1950s and 1960s, portworker unionists were more concerned with strategical and ideological issues, and - at least in the mid-1960s - the dockworker unionists were pre-occupied with ethnic argument. There would thus seem to be no direct and positive co-relation between the type of sector or type of worker and the appeal to ethnicity. But there

would again seem to be one - a negative one - between a class appeal (whether of a socialist or a populist type) and an ethnic one. In each case the suppression or disappearance of class appeal or class strategies saw a rise in ethnic factionalism. And in both cases - at both periods - ethnic factionalism seems to have been more marked in the moderate than the radical unions.

Let us sum up the argument so far. Firstly, it is evident that there was abundant material for factionalism in the port, whether based on fractioning within wage-labour or segmentation within the social formation more generally. Secondly, there is no necessary correlation between ethnic predominance in a leadership and ethnic appeal (although such leadership has evident dangers in this respect). Thirdly, an ethnic appeal can be made in a 'liberal anti-tribalist' form. Fourthly, conservative leaderships must obstruct horizontal identification amongst the masses and therefore tend to factionalism, particularly when on the defensive. Finally (and conversely) a radicalisation of the masses implies opposition to factionalism. There seems no reason to assume that liberals or moderate reformists are more tribalist than populists or radical reformists. But liberals and moderate reformists deny themselves the weapon of class ideology and mobilisation in struggling against factionalism, whether ethnic, political/ideological or personal.

How does this all tie up with our earlier theoretical discussion? There was stressed 1) the basis in popular experience for ethnic self-identification amongst the masses, 2) the virtual inevitability of class consciousness in the third world taking ethnic form, 3) the failure of liberal-democratic society, revolutionary movements and post-capitalist societies to overcome such particularism, 4) the mutually-supporting relationship of ethnicity, factionalism and clientage, and 5) the obstacle that factionalism forms for the surpassing of the hierarchical relationship between leader and follower. On the basis of our evidence and argument I would only want to point out the following. Firstly, that we do not here have evidence to trace out the connection to clientage, although we will below. We can, nonetheless, see how factionalism was used in certain cases to preserve a certain leadership constituency. Secondly, and more importantly, I would want to question or qualify Point 2 above. It is true that John Saul, in making this statement, recognised the problem that such a virtual inevitability created for revolutionary socialists. But our case does not suggest any such inevitability and - insofar as it reveals the existence of ethnic identification - suggests that it created a problem for <u>any</u> radicalisation. Perhaps Saul was thinking of <u>situations</u> of race-class identity, where either the exploiting-ruling

minority or the exploited-oppressed majority has a distinct ethnic character. But our situation (which is surely more common) is one in which the working class is ethnically mixed, even if it contains distinct ethnic strata and fractions. In such a situation, appeal to an ethnic identity even by an underprivileged minority would (inevitably?) reinforce vertical linkages to ethnic leaders and ethnic exploiters/oppressors. Insofar as we recognise the truth of the following arguments (Points 3,4 and 5), we will in any case see how factionalism reinforces clientalism. It seems that any cessation of mobilisation and consciousness raising will tend to convert unions from working-class organs into capitalistic and statist ones. Within the latter, the norms of competition and hierarchy are at home, and these cannot of themselves obstruct the reproduction of factionalism and clientalism, or other particularistic appeals. It is therefore instructive to witness in Lagos Port a moment at which movement within the unions was, if briefly, in the working-class direction.

## 12.3. External affiliation

Here we are back to the question of patron-client relations - if not ethnic ones.

The striking similarity between the two sectors here is the continuing importance of national and international affiliation for the moderates at a time when they were of decreasing importance to the radicals. The unimportance for the radicals in both sectors was due to their turning toward the workers - workers whom we have seen to have had little or no interest in a national or international working-class movement. Worker radicalisation is commonly accompanied by greater consciousness and contacts with national and international movements. But, in this case, the national movement had been demobilised by intimidation from the military regimes and by its own ideological disorientation in the face of these. The national union centres functioned most effectively as consultative or negotiating bodies during national commissions on wages. As for the international organisations, these were too incorporated into the ruling ideologies of West and East, too much a part of Cold War diplomacy, to be able to offer relevant ideas and effective assistance to the Nigerian workers. The disorientation and demobilisation of the national and international movements meant that - again - their relationship towards unions in the cargo-handling industry was primarily defined by their positions in a power and wealth hierarchy. Here we had a patronage network running from the 'big men' at the centre, down to the minor union officers at the periphery. The international organisations offered an attractive alternative source of support to that of the workers.

And since their primary demand was loyalty, they encouraged not only dependency but also factionalism as different individuals and groups fought for the limited rewards offered. As an alternative base for trade union leaders, the international organisations thus also encouraged the cleavage between leaders and members. Is this why the Western unions active in Nigeria were incapable of supporting in the cargo-handling industry those unions that were as loudly nationalistic and as effectively 'economistic' as they themselves at home?

The major difference regarding at least international trade union contacts was their continuing importance for the moderate dockworker unionists at a time when this was declining for the moderate portworker ones. This requires little explanation. The relatively unorganised dockworkers provided an attraction for external patrons - and not only international trade union ones. At the same time, we have seen that the moderate dockworker organisation was heavily dependent upon such external patrons, without whom it is unlikely to have reappeared in the docks.

In the theoretical introduction it was suggested that patronage analysis was insufficient for the understanding and surpassing of patronage relations. All we have so far done in this section is to reveal the existence of these at the level of the international trade union movement. This is certainly necessary in order to demystify the nature of international trade union relations, to penetrate beyond the projected self-image, and to show how such organisations can themselves stimulate the very factionalism and tribalism they condemn. It is also necessary in order to understand how the isolation of the two radical leaderships in the port could be a positive act, an act of liberation from such patronage. But it is evident that we need other concepts in order to specify both the relation and role of the international organisations to working-class struggle internationally, and their transformation over time. Here we can make use of Section 2 and Footnote 2 to Chapter 5, which attempt to present a marxist approach to international union history and function. This material suggests that the present form of trade union internationalism - at least as it affected Nigerian port unionism in the 1970s - is an increasingly archaic one. It is a result of a particular compromise struck in the late 19th century between the labour movement on the one hand and capital and state on the other. This same material suggests a range of possible roles or functions of the international labour movement at the present time (international relations, international union relations, international working-class solidarity). And it suggests the pressures being raised since the mid-60s for a transformation of international trade union relations.

The action of radical trade union leaders in Lagos Port was, thus, not only a reaffirmation of ties with the workers, it was also an implicit practical critique of a model and period of international trade union relations which had little left to offer except patronage. Did it not thus make its own modest contribution to the more self-conscious efforts of radical worker leaders in other peripheral capitalist countries? The fact, however, that it was in this case a barely conscious act, and that the radical leaders did not link a struggle against their client status with their at-least potential patron status meant that the danger of a further reproduction of patron-client relations in new ideological or political clothes could not be ruled out.

## 12.4. Conclusion

The initial question raised in this chapter was of the extent to which the union form itself reinforces divisions amongst workers. Let us summarise the argument before returning to this issue.

In discussing worker-leader relations we first tried to specify worker consciousness. We found amongst the workers separate orientations toward the middle salaried and petty-bourgeois strata respectively, but also a common consciousness of status. This common consciousness did not include a national and international working class, nor the other labouring people of Nigeria, but it paralleled those of these others and therefore could now be seen to have allowed for common action with them. Amongst the leaders we identified a common process of professionalisation, but without any definite process of either bureaucratisation or democratisation. It was suggested that insofar as the leaders were failing to raise the consciousness and activity of the members they could themselves be considered as occupying intermediate and mediating positions between the workers on the one hand and capital and state on the other.

In considering union structure and factionalism we identified a common process toward a collective-bargaining unionism, but again without any definite conclusion concerning bureaucratisation. However, it was then suggested that there was a definite relationship between factionalism, clientalism and conservative leadership. It could now be suggested that insofar as collective bargaining status is achieved and accepted as both means and end of union activity, unions become conservative and factionalism and clientalism will be stimulated.

The last section continued this line of argument in considering union relations 'upwards' in terms of clientage. Here a relationship was suggested between

factionalism, clientage and a national and international trade union movement marked by an increasingly archaic compromise arrangement with capital and state. Factionalism and clientage are here seen as both stimulating and being stimulated by the reproduction of capitalism and statism on a world scale, with the world trade union movement as its channel.

Where does this lead us to with respect to our fundamental question? Our case suggests that capital and state (competition and hierarchy) operate inside as well as outside or above the trade union movement. In so far as union leaders do not recognise this and take action against it, obstacles to what has been called the expansion and consolidation of a working class would seem likely to remain. There is no evidence that such action was taken nor that recognition of this problem existed amongst either of the two radical leaderships. They had, therefore, taken only a limited step away from the mediating role that capitalism seeks to foist on worker leaders. Perceived as specialised structures with an allotted role in an existing social formation, unions seem likely to reproduce old divisions or create new ones amongst workers. Perceived as a movement against capitalism and statism outside, competition and hierarchy inside, unions can contribute to overcoming divisions amongst workers. Given the failure of both radical leaderships to recognise the necessity of this within their respective sectors, it is hardly surprising that little if any effort was made at overcoming the division between them.

PART IV

COLLECTIVE WORKER PROTEST ACTION

Chapter 13: Theoretical introduction: strike action and worker organisation

Chapter 14: Portworker protest: going the whole hog?

Chapter 15: Dockworker protest: sit-ins, go-homes, and the howling mob

Chapter 16: Analysis: the slow and awkward self-definition of a working class

# Chapter 13
# THEORETICAL INTRODUCTION: STRIKE ACTION AND WORKER ORGANISATION

Part IV is concerned with collective worker protest action. There are other forms of protest (absenteeism, indiscipline, etc.)[1] which are certainly more widespread and common, but which do not require the public collective refutation of capital and state that the strike does. On the other hand, there are other forms of collective worker action (creation of cooperatives, participation in unions, voting behaviour) which may give us more information about working-class capacity to control its own environment. These, however, do not usually demand the mass involvement of strikes. Nor do they have the same dramatic - the literally theatrical - effect in defining 'us' and 'them'. If revolutions, finally, are 'festivals of the oppressed', strikes must be considered at least family celebrations in which workers assert - however briefly - their rejection of wage-slavery. We will see however that strikes are not homogeneous in character, and that the extent and nature of such protest against the wage labour relationship takes different forms in the two sectors of the cargo-handling industry.

In order to situate this material and to handle it theoretically we will in this chapter consider in turn 1) strikes as a general form of working-class protest, 2) the specificity of strikes at the capitalist periphery, and - briefly - 3) the historical setting of strike movements in Nigeria. For both the first and second we will be drawing on the work of Richard Hyman, who has written widely on strikes in the British context (1972, 1975), the industrialised capitalist countries more generally (1979a), at the periphery (1979b), and who has also synthesised recent marxist writings on the topic (1980).

## 13.1. Strikes in general

Firstly, then, strikes as a general social phenomenon.[2] We may begin with two initial assertions. The first is that strike action occurs within a setting of antagonistic relations of production and are an expression of protest against the exploitation and oppression that these imply. This is simply to re-

assert a general view of the workers' position spelled out in earlier chapters. The second is that strikes represent creative, positive and purposive action by workers to establish collective social control over forces which capital and state cannot themselves effectively master.

This does not mean that strikes are all of one piece. The general social position and the general needs of workers mean that the potential for strike action is always present. But workers may take part in any particular strike for a variety of individual or group motives, such motives may conflict, the expressed motive or overt cause of the action may conceal underlying or more general ones, and the very purpose of the strike may only become explicit during the event.

When considering how worker discontents are transformed into protest action, one much surpass explanations in terms of simple 'spontaneity' from below or 'organisation' from above in favour of a recognition of the complex interplay between workers and leaders. All collective protest is organised and structured, with leaders playing a crucial role in both the initiation of action and in shaping (out of the variety of worker discontents) both the meaning and purpose of the strike. Such 'selective articulation' of protest may, of course, be not only by formally recognised union or worker leaders, but by opinion leaders amongst the workers, or by influential individuals or organisations outside the unions - or the working class itself.

If we recognise that organisation is necessary for struggle, then we must also recognise that organisation restrains struggle. This is a matter well-recognised for the 'collective bargaining' union that attempts to formulate demands in negotiable forms and terms (quantitative or incremental ones being the most appropriate), and to reduce protest action to conventional or even ritualised forms under leadership control. However, such restraint on worker assertion is the effect of the 'consolidation of hierarchical representational structures' in general - of <u>any</u> separation of the activation and representation of interests.

In recognising the capacity of worker organisations to both express and repress worker discontents, we must not fail to distinguish them from other interest organisations within capitalist societies, of which analogous statements could be made. What is distinctive of worker organisations is that they are constituted through struggle. Workers are not only subordinated to capital, they are atomised by market competition, and each possesses separate needs, aspirations and interests for which (unlike the profit motive and cash calculus for capitalists) there is no 'natural' common denominator. Given the relative

powerlessness and division of workers, their organisational strength can derive only from the 'mobilisation of collectivity' itself. The willingness to take action is both a cause and an outcome of a collective self-definition of interests. This implies a struggle to overcome both the assigned role of the worker under capital and the ideological forms by which this is disguised. The creation of a working-class identity and the meeting of working-class needs is something which requires a redefinition of the identity and needs of working-class individuals and groups. Strikes need to be understood as contributing to this process.

If we understand the process of working-class self-identification in terms of a re-definition through struggle of identity and needs, then we can better understand the process by which major working-class struggles to overcome a certain institutionalisation or codification of forms of organisation and protest lead to a re-institutionalisation:

> Re-institutionalisation of militancy is facilitated where its initial impetus involves the more aggressive pursuit of existing collective bargaining objectives, rather than radically new strategies and definitions of collective interest. (Hyman 1980:23-4).

The phrase 'collective bargaining' could be here removed to provide us with a general recognition of the limits on collective protest activity. Evidently, the militancy or extremity of strikes is in itself no indicator of the capacity to extend control over society, or even the workers' own organisations.

## 13.2. Strikes at the capitalist periphery

Hyman's generalisations are, in fact, based on consideration of the strike phenomenon in industrialised capitalist societies. Let us now consider the phenomenon at the capitalist periphery by first surveying some evidence. In an earlier overview of some 20 papers on third world strikes[3] (Waterman 1979c), the following points were made about the nature of strike action. Firstly, that even barely-proletarianised workers, isolated from the world labour movement, and in a very hostile environment, are capable of bold, imaginative and effective strike action. In a study of the Nambibian strike of 1971-2, Richard Moorsom (1979) showed how migrant workers, living under a tightly-policed, colonial, racist regime, and without trade unions, were nonetheless capable of organising sustained industrial action. What might before this action have been considered evidence of 'weakness' or 'subordination', now appeared as the bedrock on which aggressive action was based. The workers were able to exploit their semi-peasant status, their isolation in

well-policed compounds, the defensive ethic of brotherhood, to attack first individual companies and then the regime itself.

This brings us to a second point, the manner in which strike actions spread and escalate. It is notable that all the major strike movements surveyed began with 'narrow', 'economistic', 'sectional' demands. It was during campaigns on these immediate issues that the strikes began to escalate to a higher and more directly political level. The escalation from one level to another was frequently accompanied by a process of widening, as movements spread from one factory to another, from factories into the streets and popular residential areas and even into the countryside. Thus strike movements allow for the overcoming of two crucial cleavages produced by capitalist economic development or state ideology and action: that between different sectors of the labouring poor and that between the industrial and political levels.

This, in turn, brings us to a third point. Even if action within the industry and residential area can be organised by the workers themselves, action in the 'political' arena (i.e. struggle with or against the state) inevitably means action in collaboration with or mediated by intermediate strata. Moorsom pointed out the leading role played by students in planning and in mobilising workers for an attack on the contract labour system as a means of strengthening the national liberation movement. Although he asserted that the actual movement rested 'entirely with the organisers and workers themselves' (1970:221) and that it was not subordinated to wider considerations of nationalist strategy, he also showed that when they returned to their place of origin in Ovamboland, the leaders came into collaboration with 'an already militant white-collar opposition' there. Similarly, Shaheed writing on the Karachi strike wave of 1969-72, stated that

> the movement against Ayub Khan was a nation-wide effort, and involved strata of society in addition to the working class - notably professionals such as lawyers, teachers, doctors...(Shaheed 1979:191).

The problem here is that in escalating from the industrial to the political level, the strike movement is likely to change from a working-class one into something else. If the 1971-2 Namibia strike had been successful, its likely result would have indeed been the introduction of a 'free labour market' (Moorsom), a state staffed by ex-students and white-collar workers, and a trade union movement created by the new national state and probably staffed by the same people.

Where, in peripheral formations, strike movements

- or generations of working-class struggle - have won the right to organise there is no guarantee that the union leadership will in all (or even in any) case favour strike action. My survey suggested that union leaders - communists and social democratic, from the periphery or the core capitalist formations - had considerable reservations about strikes in the third world. George Fernandes, social-democratic leader of the railwaymen during the historic Indian railway strike of 1974, revealed (Fernandes 1980) that his efforts were directed to preventing the strike before it occured and to calling it off once it took place. Agustin Munoz, of the pro-Allende Chilean trade union centre, failed in a historical survey to mention worker strikes that pushed Chile to the left despite the compromising of Allende with the right (Munoz 1979). Gilbert Julis (1979), of the French Communist-led Confederation Generale du Travail, distinguished between under-developed countries of a more-progressive and of a bourgeois type, and gave examples of strikes from the latter but not from the former. The extreme point was reached by Solomon (1979) of the Brussels-based International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, who declared that

> the right to strike is not an absolute and unqualified right. It is subject to restrictions in the interest of public good. Workers are members of society and must respect the interests of society...

and concluded that

> contrary to popular belief, strong, democratic, free trade unions are organisations which help to prevent strikes and are not their cause...

In fact, the only trade unionists surveyed who seemed to have an unambiguously positive attitude toward strikes were two temporarily-exiled Peruvian miners' leaders, coming from a country in which a military regime with radical pretensions was provoking mass working-class resistance whilst being unable or unwilling to channel it off or crush it.

The overview did not, however, suggest that unions could be dismissed as agents of the state and bourgeoisie. It recognised rather, the manner in which even conservative leaderships responded to forceful worker protest action. Shaheed showed that in the strike situation certain leaders simply ignored the pressures from below, whilst others in fact adjusted to them. For Shaheed, it was not simply a case of the 'radical' workers opposing the 'compromising' bureaucrats. It was more a matter of the impact of working-class action on working-class organisation. What he

showed was such an organisation being brought under closer control by the workers, either over the decade he was dealing with or during the strike movement he was concentrating on. Even after this assertion by the workers, ambiguity remained within the leadership:

> leaders who were formally associated with the old form of organisation and mode of operations...change their mode of operations and in turn work in cooperation with new forms of organisation... (Shaheed 1979:201)

Yet, progress in working-class organisation had been made. The lesson was drawn from Argentinian experience by Elizabeth Jelin, and it is certainly of more than Argentinian relevance:

> In the Argentine case it is difficult to deny the fact that 'bureaucratic' leaders were representative. Indeed, important sectors of the working class were identified with their leadership and with the struggle they were waging. The 'bureaucratic' union bargaining organisation did not result from the will of certain labour leaders and/or from certain state officials, but was for a long time anchored in and responded to the needs and orientations of the Peronist mass of workers. Nonetheless, the processes of political and economic change which have taken place in Argentina in recent years generated new sectors of workers and new needs. For these, the union structure proved to be inadequate. Their field of struggle centred directly around the workplace and their forms of action were direct, with high rank-and-file participation and less delegation to union organisations. (Jelin 1979:251).

It is evident from this rapid and limited overview that where working-class protest action actually makes working-class history is within and around itself. It is, therefore, back to working-class organisation and consciousness that we have to look if we want to estimate the success of working-class action. This applies not only to cases in which mass working-class protest activity has brought about political revolutions, but even to cases in which strikes appear to have failed. The point was made by Shaheed:

> For the workers of Karachi, the feeling of power and of control over their own lives - however contingent and temporary this may have been - at moments of strike action constitutes the success of those strikes, and this feeling may constitute the ultimate long-term success of such action. Just as

> grievances accumulate in the collective consciousness of the working class, these experiences of relative autonomy and control over their own lives remain and accumulate in their collective consciousness and help to form the goal for future action.

Generalising on strikes at the periphery on the basis of the same set of studies, Hyman declares that.

> Commonly they are a form of pressure or protest directed against the government rather than individual private employers; accordingly, they are likely to possess an overt political dimension. An important feature of their development may be the demand that what are supposedly organisations representing workers' interests perform this role adequately in practice; or else the struggle for acceptance of new representative institutions. Strikes which are an explicit challenge to established authority are commonly intimately linked with other forms of popular protest; thus upsurges of strike action normally occur in periods of more general social and political turmoil (Hyman 1979b:323).

On the basis of my own overview above, I would add and stress the inevitable ambiguity of the 'overt political dimension' insofar as reference here is to the politics of state rather that of the workplace, the place of residence, and the workers' own organisations.

Hyman, however, goes further, suggesting that generalisation about 'third world strikes' is likely to be both too broad and too narrow. It is too broad because the category 'third world'

> includes feudal backwaters and societies with a confident and cosmopolitan national bourgeoisie; military regimes, one-party states and (in diminishing numbers) liberal parliamentary systems; economies with a substantial 'modern' sector and a well-established urban proletariat, and those still overwhelmingly rural and agrarian; victims of unqualified economic imperialism and possessors of a significant degree of economic autarchy; state-managed economies and those in which private capital exerts a key role; societies in which the working class subscribes to an ideology of national unity and those where there is an extensive consciousness of a distinctive identity and divergent interests; countries where representative working-class organisations can exist openly, and those

> where mobilisation must occur clandestinely. (Hyman 1979b:323).

The isolation of 'third world strikes' is narrowing, Hyman suggests, because of the evident parallels between strikes at the periphery and those in either core capitalist or post-capitalist formations.[4] This is a point worth stressing. It is evident that 'incorporation' is not a monopoly of core capitalist formations - nor is it restricted to liberal-democratic polities. Conversely, Hyman's above-cited generalisation about strikes at the periphery could be applied almost word for word to capitalism's other periphery - the post-capitalist formations![5]

## 13.3. Strike movements in Nigeria

We may conclude this discussion of strikes with a note on strikes in Nigeria. Part of the national background is provided in Chapters 14 and 15 themselves. What is, perhaps, the most important factor to recall here is the relationship of major industrial strikes or strike movements to national political ones. Thus, the strikes in 1946 and the following years inevitably took on a nationalist political colouring and were quite deliberately exploited for their nationalist potential by the petty-bourgeois and intermediate-strata politicians who led the nationalist movement. This is quite clear from the manner in which the nationalist politicians who had supported the 1945 strike began to distance themselves from the unions as soon as the de-colonisation process began (Cohen 1974: 164). It is even more clear from the Enugu affair of 1949. Striking coalminers had been fired on by police, resulting in 25 dead and 51 wounded. An 'inter-party, inter-ethnic, inter-class' National Emergency Committee was set up (Cohen 1974:74). This lasted less than one year. The major result of the nationalist uproar was a British decision to allow Nigerianisation of certain government posts. And the event itself soon ceased to be even commemorated. The political success that crowned this period - national independence - was not to be repeated.

Already in 1963 worker disappointment with Independence began to be expressed in strike action. In 1964 there took place a major General Strike which - although concerned primarily with wages - was taken as expressing popular discontent with an inegalitarian and corrupt social order (Cohen 1974:164-68). The attempts of socialist parties and radical union centres to convert this discontent into a directly political attack on the regime failed. During the (admittedly disturbed) general elections following the General Strike, neither the communist Socialist Workers and Farmers Party nor the independent-socialist Nigerian Labour Party managed to make any showing. The workers

remained firmly attached to the old nationalist or new regionalist parties (Melson 1970). And the civilian regime was eventually overthrown by a military coup.

The two strike waves of 1970-71 (Adebo) and 1975 (Udoji) remained unarticulated politically either by working-class or non-working-class forces (Adeogun 1979; Peace 1979:Ch.6; Lubeck 1979). The first of these waves was also the first which was essentially factory-based and demonstrated the coming-of-age of the industrial working class in Nigeria. The second was supported by most middle-stratum wage-earners in Nigeria and expressed general social discontent with the military regime of General Gowon. But the fall of Gowon was again engineered by a military coup, not a working-class or popular movement.

Between such major movements it has been possible to witness a less dramatic pattern in which discontent led to wage commissions, commissions recommended increases to public sector workers, and other sectors then struck to get the increases applied to themselves also. But, whilst expressing and feeding wage-earner consciousness, such strikes have remained confined to the industrial level.

Against this national background, let us consider the evidence we have of collective industrial protest action in the Lagos cargo-handling industry.

NOTES

1. A point developed by Robin Cohen (1980). Cohen is concerned to surpass the terms in which African working-class protest and consciousness was considered by radical scholars in the 1970s - terms in which this present work has been largely conceived. There has, he says, 'been too much reliance on data relating to strikes, unionisation and overt political militance, and for the most part a failure to discover and evaluate the silent, unorganised, covert responses of African workers' (Cohen 1980:8). He feels it necessary to specify the precise implications of the capitalist labour process and then, on this basis, to identify the variety of labour responses. Imposition of the wage-labour relationship has implied 1) enforced proletarianisation, 2) managerial control, 3) psychological adjustment, 4) differential reward, 5) political control. He identifies 15 types of worker response, of which only five or so - including economic and political strikes - have been customarily considered by radical scholars. The other 10 are desertion, community withdrawal or revolt, target working, task/efficiency/time bargaining, sabotage, creation of a work (worker? PW)

culture, accidents and sickness, drug use, belief in other-wordly solutions, and theft. Cohen believes that attention to these multiple forms of covert protest will enable us to overcome the 'formula dichotomies' (economic/political, reformist/revolutionary, etc.) that have marred or limited studies of overt protest. Moreover, recognition of the 'variety of responses and tenacity of purpose shown by African workers in their attempt to resist the capitalist labour process' will reveal the so far limited 'capacity of African trade unions and revolutionary parties to channel such dissent for progressive or revolutionary ends' (22). It is not possible here to do justice to Cohen's original conceptualisation and argument. One can only welcome the broader and deeper research agenda for the 1980s that it implies. But I do feel it necessary to make a few points that relate to my work: 1) The error of 'formula dichotomies' must be combatted at the level of theory, otherwise it may be simply reproduced within the new extended area of study (overt/covert? extant-and-readily-observed/latent-and-subterannean?); 2) the unions/parties have channeled (and converted) discontent into forms (and demands) that suit unions/parties - 'economic' bargaining with employers and 'political' bargaining with or over the state; 3) the political import of the new focus is that it is on areas over which workers do or could exercise direct control unmediated by unions/parties - and that it allows us to measure increasing worker consciousness in terms of 'capacity to control' rather than adoption of ideologies; 4) studies of forms of overt protest such as strikes also need to be carried out from the perspective suggested in Point 3 - something I hope to do within the rest of Part IV.

2. What follows is a restructured and selective synthesis of the final parts of Hyman (1980). It should be noted that Hyman is himself drawing here in part on Offe and Wiesenthal (1980).

3. This was written in response to a 1977 seminar on 'Third World Strikes' held at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague in 1977.

4. Hyman attempts to surpass a 'three worlds' typology of strikes by offering - tentatively and with qualifications - a matrix of 'schematic contexts of strike activity' (1979b:327). This has 'employer-state perceptions of labour action' along one axis, and 'goals of labour action' along the other. Employer/state attitudes are either 'integrative/corporativist', 'troublesome but legitimate', or 'disruptive/illegitimate'. Labour goals

are either 'moderate-reformist', 'radical compromising', or 'radical uncompromising'. Whilst I find Hyman's ambition admirable, I also find his categories formalistic and empty of historical-social content. The typology is therefore open to the critique offered in Chapter 5, Footnote 7. His qualifications to the scheme, moreover, would seem so extensive as to both seriously undermine it and suggest the difficulty of constructing a more adequate one:

> The schema ignores internal differentiations within both labour and capital. On the side of labour, vertical divisions (between industries, occupations, races, sexes) and horizontal (between central leadership, local activists and the more passive membership) are often highly significant. On the other side, divergent interests between fractions of capital, contrast between 'progressive' and 'conservative' employers, and tensions both within the state and in its relationship to capital, can all exert a profound influence. Moreover, variations between regions, industries of tribal groups may case doubts on the validity of any single national stereotype (334).

I would like to hope that my own typoplgies in Chapter 5 might provide at least a base for a more adequate schema.

5. This is something that has been recognised by both a socialist Brazilian strike leader and a fascist South African politician. Both were responding to the Polish workers' movement of 1981-2. The Brazilian was the first national working-class leader to not only identify with the Polish movement but to recognise the parallels with his own (Da Silva ('Lula') 1980). The South African politician did not identify with the Polish movement, but was reported in the Dutch press as saying 'we have a Polish situation on our hands here' - meaning, presumably, that neither repression nor concession was capable of checking the strike movement.

# Chapter 14
# PORTWORKER PROTEST: GOING THE WHOLE HOG?

A careful combing of available government, NPA and trade union documents, and a reading of the press since 1970, does not reveal more than 12 industrial disputes in the period 1968-77. Indeed, concerning the first two of these (see Table 14.1) there remains doubt over whether action went beyond the declaration of a dispute. Several of the other actions are of such a limited nature that it has been felt necessary to extend the account one year beyond the following one on the dockworkers. There is also a problem of paucity of material on those actions for which we do have more than a cryptic reference. Nonetheless, the record is rich enough to give some impression of the nature of protest action within the NPA at this time. It is also sufficient to demonstrate the differences between the unions. Strike action within the NPA in the 1970s has evidently been in large part a discontinuous campaign led by the R&PT&CSU. Not only was it responsible for eight of the 12 strikes, but its successful action inspired two of the others. And one of these two was led by NPAWU dissidents who later joined the R&PT&CSU precisely because of its greater militancy.

## 14.1. The Civil War backlog dispute

The disputes which broke out in 1971 appear to have been over a series of grades and trades issues on which the R&PT&CSU felt the NPA was dragging its heels. As eventually listed (Labour Review, 3rd Quarter, 1971) there were 13 items, including the appointment of an acting timekeeper, promotions, conversion of daily-paid to permanent staff, upgrading of securitymen, positions of secretary-typists, etc. The issue was presented by the union as follows:

> During the last Civil War we exercised patience and restraint and refrained from engaging in any industrial action because we believe that industrial upheaval during the period of the national emergency is not conducive to concentrated efforts for the crushing of rebellion... We adopted reasonable and constitutional methods. We went to

## Table 14.1. Chart of reported portworker strikes in Lagos, 1968-77

| Dates | Numbers/ Site | Leadership | Issues | Comments | Sources |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1968-9 | | NMTUF | Outstanding promotions. Appointments of outsiders | Promotions later released. No further details available | NMTUF Conference documents 1973 |
| 1970 | | NMTUF | Military Port Commandant's decision to deprive workers of benefits from compulsory overtime | Successful | NMTUF Conference Documents 1973 |
| 19.3.71 | | R&PT&CSU | Failure to implement agreements reached in June 1970 | Negotiations open on day of strike but without settlement | See text |
| 1-5.7.71 | 1,200 | R&PT&CSU | 13, including appointment of timekeeper, promotions, acting allowances, housing, conversion of daily-paid to permanent staff, etc. | Issue sent to conciliator. Unsettled items go to IAT. | See text |
| 10-11.8.72 | 10,000 (inc. NRC) | R&PT&CSU | Non-implementation of IAT award of one-eighth increase to R&PT&CSU members in Traffic Department | Labour Ministry orders payment before September 30. | See text |
| | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3-4.10.72 | 1,000 Eng.Dept. | NPAWU | Extension to Engineering Department of one-eighth award | Organised by NPAWU dissidents, some of whom tamper with power supply. Settled by NPA promise to union leadership of action on issue | See text |
| 1.11.72 | | NMTUF | Extension of one-eighth award to all workers. | Workers start work late in protest. Management eventually cuts official hours to 39. | See text |
| 30.6-1.7.73 | 5,000 nationally | R&PT&CSU | One-eighth award, its extension to uncovered categories; release of promotions,etc. | Management promises to implement within 30 days an agreement reached previous year | See text |
| 2-4.10.74 | 300 | R&PT&CSU | Conditions of service; filling of secretarial vacancies | No further details available | Labour Ministry Register of labour disputes |
| 6-10.3.75 | | R&PT&CSU | Delay in payment of Udoji award | Ministry intervenes and NPA pays balance on March 19 | See text |
| April 1976 | Headquarters & Port Managers office | R&PT&CSU | Failure to consult on hours change consequent on 5-day week; arrest & disciplining of union activists | Activists released and reinstated. Hours issue goes to IAT. | See text |
| 1.11.77 (½ day) | | R&PT&CSU | Implementation of IAP awards | No further details available | See text |

> negotiations, we went to conciliations and we went to arbitrations... Despite... our constitutional approaches we have been given great disappointments... (Daily Times, June 9, 1971).

The disappointment, according to the same statement, was the failure of NPA to meet it for nine months after the declaration of a trade dispute in June 1970, and its failure to implement an agreement signed in that month. After the union appealed to the Transport Ministry in February 1971, the Ministry instructed the NPA to negotiate. According to Adebola (R&PT&CSU Conference Documents 1973:32), 'Inspite of this letter the Management of the Authority still refused to meet us'. The union then called a one-day industrial action, on March 3, 1971, following which, 'this same Management wrote that they wanted to meet us on the very day'.

Despite the negotiations, no further progress was made. In May 1971, management claimed that settlement had been held up by the Statutory Corporations Service Commission (SCSC) which had not acknowledged an NPA letter for six months. In its Daily Times statement, the union pointed out that the SCSC was just along the road from the NPA, and suggested that that body had in any case no powers over many of this issues raised. The union then gave the NPA (and the NRC with which it was also in dispute) until the end of the month to settle with it, 'failing which we shall take any action we deem fit'. The Transport Ministry again instructed the NPA to settle the issues, and the NPA declared that it would not permit the situation to deteriorate until a strike occurred (Daily Times, June 11, 1971). Evidently it was unsuccessful. On July 1 there began a 'work-to-rule' action which lasted at least three days (five according to the Daily Times, July 8, 1971), and which involved 1,200 R&PT&CSU members (Labour Review, 3rd Quarter, 1971). It was called off after a tripartite meeting, the official apprehension of a dispute and its reference to a Ministry conciliator. Although the strike was called off, Adebola continued to mobilise his members, holding a mass meeting at NPA Headquarters, and seeking permission for 'a peaceful demonstration... in support of their fight for improved working conditions' (Daily Times, July 16, 1971). With the help of the conciliator, the union managed to achieve a number of its demands, the unsettled issues being sent to the IAT (R&PT&CSU Conference Report, 1973:40).

## 14.2. The one-eighth dispute

This was a long-drawn-out dispute, primarily between the R&PT&CSU and the NPA, although the other unions were drawn in following the success of the first

one. It began as a claim for parity in hours between quay staff (clerical staff in the massive Traffic Department) who were working a 44-hour week along with the manual workers, and other clerical staff who were on a 39-hour week. At some point during the negotiation or arbitration of this issue, Adebola seems to have seen the possibility of broadening the affected categories to include other Traffic Department staff, and NPA management seems to have failed to note this danger.[2] Be this as it may, the fact is that when the IAT made a favourable award on this in 1972, it read as follows:

> There shall be no award in respect of the claim of 39-hour week but in compensation therefore the Tribunal awards an allowance of one-eighth of the salary to staff of the Traffic Department of the Authority who work a 44-hour week. (FRN Official Gazette, August 27, 1972).

The wording now certainly suggested that it applied to all Traffic Department staff and not just quay staff. It may have been either due to this, or to the general lethargy of the Labour Ministry in confirming awards at this time, that a delay occurred. And it may have been either the potential in the wording or the growing frustration of the union that caused it to call what was called a 'no pay no work' action on August 10-11, 1972. This affected 10,000 workers in the NPA and NRC (with which the union was also in dispute), and was said to have cost £N 50,000 before it was called off. This did not, however, occur before Adebola had had a six-hour session with Anthony Enahoro, the Commissioner for Labour. And when it was called off this was, in Adebola's works, 'as a mark of respect to General Gowon who had shown interest in the matter' (Daily Times, August 12, 1972). Enahoro promised to confirm the IAT awards, and it was announced that payment would be made in September.

Immediately after the award was gazetted, however, there came an NPA declaration that:

> The award covers only staff represented by the R&PTSU before the amalgamation of that union with NPACWU. In other words it is exclusive to quay staff, shunters, diesel engine drivers, porters and other staff of the Traffic Department. (NPA Statement, August 31, 1972).

This represented an unwilling concession by management to the unfortunate wording of the IAT award, at the same time as an attempt to ensure that other NPA workers would not get the mistaken idea that they could get it applied to themselves. That it was an unwilling

concession is suggested by Adebola's complaint on October 12 to the Labour Ministry that

> the management of the NPA has started to work against the Conciliation Agreements and... has even stated that it will not implement [them] (R&PT&CSU Conference Documents 1973).

That management was mistaken in its somewhat naive belief that it could confine to members of one union in one department a one-eighth increase in pay (plus the customary arrears and other associated rate changes) was also rapidly demonstrated.

Immediately after the NPA announcement, the General Secretary of the NPAWU reminded management that

> my members in the Engineering, Stores and Harbours Departments throughout the Ports work the same 44-hour week and night duties; as that is the case my union demands that its members already mentioned above should be covered and enjoy the award since they all work under the same management. (NPAWU to NPA, August 31, 1972).

The other NPA unions, through the NMTUF, then issued a demand for an extension of the award to all NPA workers on a 44-hour week. When management refused on the grounds that it could not vary a government award, the NMTUF produced an ultimatum. This threatened that it would 'ask its members to revert to 39-hour week in conformity with present salary scale' if the concession were not made by October 31, 1972 (NMTUF to Labour Ministry, October 2, 1972).

Such a limited threat was clearly insufficient for the workers in the Engineering Department who were numbers of the NPAWU. There are conflicting accounts of what happened there. The NPAWU claims that it 'ordered the Lagos Branch to an industrial action', it adds that

> During the action, 11 of our members were involved on the charges of tampering with the NPA properties. Some were suspended from duty, others' appointments were terminated. With our united, relentless efforts and cooperation of the management, the whole affected men even with the Hire and Fire ones amongst them were returned back to their respective jobs. (NPAWU Executive Council Documents, 1973).

Ugwuanyi denies this account on some points and complements it on others. He states that he, along with other branch leaders, consulted with their followers in

the Mechanical Workshops and Civil Engineering and decided to go on strike on their own: 'realising the usual attitude of the NPAWU national officers towards positive action they were kept off the show' (Ugwuanyi 1978:3). He further declares that the union leadership disowned responsibility for the strike when called to account for it by the NPA. The strike took place on October 3-4, affecting some 1,000 workers. The reason for the disciplining of the 11 was, according to Ugwuanyi that they cut off the electricity supply on Apapa Quay:

> This was done on their own initiative by a group of our members. They tampered with the generating plant...We did not order them to do it. But we also did not order them to reconnect it. (Interview Notes, April 1978).

Ugwuanyi further states that when the NPAWU leadership made an agreement with the NPA that brought the strike to an end, it also agreed that the tamperers could be disciplined. He argues that it was only because of the strong protest of his branch (which supported the men by taking collections within the departments affected) that the leadership took action to defend them.

The strike was called off on the promise of the NPA that it would consider extension of the award. There having been no settlement by the end of the month, the NMTUF began its threatened action on November 1:

> the Federation reverted all the workers to 39-hour week... The Management noticed the action from morning when those to resume duty as early as from 5 a.m. according to schedule were all resumed at 7 a.m....A hurried meeting of the Federation and the Management was arranged (NPAWU Executive Council Documents 1973).

Despite the comparatively mild form of protest, management now apparently felt that it would have to make a concession to the labour force as a whole. In order to reduce its cost, the NPA proposed that from November 1 all workers would be on a 39-hour week, with extra hours being paid at overtime rates. The issue of arrears (which the unions wanted backdated to the point at which the Traffic Department workers had got theirs) was to go to arbitration. As for the workers who had got the one-eighth, they were to remain - somewhat oddly - on their 44-hour week. Delighted though the workers must have been with this easy victory, it left the NPA to foot an enormous bill, and to deal with a workforce officially working different hours and being paid different rates. In a later appeal against the original IAT interpretation, the NPA stated that the

one-eighth award was costing it N900,000 per annum within the Traffic Department and would cost it N2,864,000 if it was extended to NPA as a whole. It further complained that the general introduction of a 39-hour week (as a cheaper alternative) was not being accepted by the Traffic Department staff as 'nullifying the Arbitration Award made to them even if its justification no longer exists' (NPA Statement, April 10, 1973). What management was apparently trying to do was to get the IAT to order a 39-hour week in place of the one-eighth award.

In early 1973 one union was calling 1972 'a most revolutionary year', whilst mentioning aspects of the one-eighth issue still to be settled (NMWU Conference 1973). As for the NMTUF, although it was for most of the 1970s in bitter conflict with the R&PT&CSU, and although it apparently felt the Engineering Department strike 'was not justified', it still felt it necessary to:

> congratulate...the R&PT&CSU for this singular achievement which formed the basis for the agreement reached. (NMTUF Conference Documents 1972).

The R&PT&CSU still seemed unsatisfied, complaining forcefully and at length about the failure of NPA to implement the decision of the IAT, as well as of delays in the processing of matters referred to the IAT (R&PT&CSU Conference Documents 1973). Meanwhile, the NPA distinguished its 'most soothing relationship' with the NMTUF in general with the lack of restraint and responsibility of a union clearly identifiable as the R&PT&CSU (NMTUF Conference Documents 1972).

By April 1973 the R&PT&CSU was again in dispute with the NPA, with the Labour Ministry appointing a conciliator and warning the union against taking strike action (Daily Times, April 9, 1973). Whilst management was appealing to the IAT against paying the one-eighth to the Traffic Department staff, it also seems to have stopped payment of this to the workers. This led Adebola to place an advertisement in the press in which he warned NPA against anticipating any result from the IAT (Daily Times, April 19, 1973). His warning apparently being ineffective, the union held a meeting to discuss the matter with its activists, and followed this up with an action on June 30 and July 1, 1973. This was carried out once again within both NPA and NRC. Within the NPA it involved over 3,000 workers directly and another 1,000 indirectly. The main issue was again the one-eighth award, as well as its extension to other Traffic Department categories, and the release of agreed promotions. With the help of a Ministry officer, management settled the issue by promising to implement within 30 days an agreement on the matter

signed the previous year (NPA IR Report 1974). Although this seems to have been the end of the major dispute, the one-eighth issue was still having repercussions as late as 1977.

## 14.3. The Udoji award dispute

Apart from a minor three-day action affecting 300 R&PT&CSU members in 1974 (see Table 14.1), the next strike at NPA was over the Udoji award in 1975. The Udoji award made massive increases to public sector workers without requiring industrial action from them. The award, however, was full of anomalies. This meant delays in payment at a time of high expectations and high anxiety amongst workers (who knew that market prices were increasing daily as a result of the award). In the case of the NPA, it was found that assistant supervisors had been put on grade level 05. As a result of representations by the NPAWU, management placed the supervisors on 06 as an interim measure, meanwhile informing the Public Services Review Panel (appointed to deal with such anomalies) of the action it had taken. On March 3 the R&PT&CSU wrote a letter protesting about such a change being made without the approval of the Review Panel and demanding that certain union members who had previously been on the same grade as the assistant supervisors should now be raised to 06. The letter was distributed as a leaflet throughout the port (NPAWU to R&PT&CSU, March 20, 1975). Apparently as a result of such anomalies (or protests about them), the NPA had only paid out eight percent of the Udoji award by February 15. The R&PT&CSU now called out its members on a five-day action for the balance of the award. The action began on March 6. On March 8 the Port Manager was reporting

> that traffic operations remain partially paralysed as members of the R&PT&CSU continue their industrial action...Members of the NMWU also have continued to protest...Some traffic staff obstructed officers who tried to render skeleton services and also drove out of the quays privately-owned forklift drivers...I had been reliably informed this morning that they had planned to block all accesses to and major roads within the quays. I have taken necessary precautions to ensure that their plans do not materialise. (Port Manager to General Manager, March 8, 1975).

Meetings with the participation of Ministry officials failed to solve the issue until March 10. On that day, Brigadier Adefope, the Commissioner of Labour, intervened and seems to have managed to bring the action to an end (Daily Times, March 10, 1975). One of the things that the NPA had been trying to do was to again stop the payment of the one-eighth. At the March 10

meeting it promised to drop this issue, and also provided assurances about payment of the balance of the Udoji award (NPA to R&PT&CSU, March 11, 1975).

The strike certainly demonstrated to NPA the continuing militancy of the R&PT&CSU, and probably convinced NPA workers that this was the most dynamic union in the corporation. Riding high on the crest of publicity and success, Adebola now declared a six-month industrial truce as his union's contribution to the decongestion exercise (Daily Times, April 11, 1975). Although this act of magnanimity is not out of character with Adebola's Civil War truce and his undoubted nationalism, it is significant that Bernard Odulana, the leader of the militant dockworker union, was to himself declare a similar truce one month later. Whether there was some direct pressure from the Gowon regime (now in its last crisis-ridden months) on the two militants we cannot know. What we do know is that in neither case did the concession lead to any significant change in the attitude of government or employers towards the workers or unions concerned.

## 14.4. The five-day week dispute

On April 1, 1976, the government introduced a five-day 40-hour week for the civil service and the public sector. On March 18, the NPA had apparently met with the R&PT&CSU and agreed that before any circular on new working hours was issued there would be further consultations with the union. When management decided without further consultation that the new hours would be 8.00-16.00, the union directed affected members to work 07.30-15.30 instead. It claimed that these were the hours worked by many government offices and corporations, and that they were more convenient for access to public transport. The action affected those union members working at Headquarters and in the Port Manager's department. On April 3, management sacked six R&PT&CSU activists. It claimed that

> the roles played by the staff concerned differed considerably from any normal trade union activities. What had happened...was that a few staff who also were officials of the union, rather over-zealously, took upon themselves to undermine Management's official instruction by issuing their own instruction to the staff were noticed to have ejected other staff from their offices as well as inciting them against their officers (NPA-R &PT&CSU Minutes, April 15, 1976).

Not only did it sack a number of officers, it also had one of them arrested and locked up by the police. Protest against this then spread to Apapa Quays where union members stopped work until the man was released.

The main issue now became that of the dismissals, with management eventually agreeing to reinstate the men without loss of benefits (NPA to R&PT&CSU, April 15, 1976).

The five-day issue went to arbitration, where it was settled in favour of the management. It must, however, be understood less for the issue itself than as part of the general campaign of Adebola. Management had not only had a union leader arrested, it had also tried to restrict the holding of union meetings, was using the police to spy on them, and even had armed police present whilst they were being held (NPA Acting Security Chief to Port Manager, April 14; R&PT&CSU Statement, April 23; NPA-R&PT&CSU Minutes, May 4, 1976). The strike must also be seen within the national context. The union had struck despite the reaffirmation of the strike ban by Decree No. 7 in February. And Adebola followed this strike not by a further truce offer but by defending his strike record and denouncing strike bans before the Adebiyi Tribunal.

## 14.5. The non-implementation dispute

Evidently, the R&PT&CSU was reaping benefits from its aggressive activity. In June 1977 it organised a five-day action in Port Harcourt, an action which involved the national leadership and which once again brought it into conflict with the other NPA unions (Ugwuanyi 1978:12-13; NPAWU to Labour Ministry, June 7, 1977). Meanwhile it was awaiting the outcome of the previous dispute, which was being processed through the IAP. On June 16, 1977, the Ministry informed the union of the panel's favourable decision on four of the seven issues it had raised. The union had obtained favourable judgements both on the reinstatement of the sacked officer and on arrears still owing from the one-eighth dispute, as well as on certain procedural questions. On July 21 the union wrote to the General Manager threatening a withdrawal of labour if the four awards were not implemented within 30 days.

The R&PT&CSU might seem here to have been merely continuing a by-now traditional strategy. However, we must bear in mind that Decree 23 of 1976 had extended strike restrictions even further within such essential services as the ports. The decree had been followed up by direct government intervention in a teachers' strike, the banning of a bankworkers' union and the proscription from union activities of its militant leader. Just six days after the R&PT&CSU issued its strike threat, the press announced even tougher anti-strike legislation. Strikes which came outside the strict limitations of the 1976 laws would now amount to breach of contract, prejudicing all workers' rights dependent on unbroken employment. Furthermore, workers could no longer be paid for the period on strike - a

traditional clause in the settlement of strikes in Nigeria. Finally, the power of employers to cede wage increases was restricted, and increased fines and terms of imprisonment were threatened for breaches of trades disputes legislation (New Nigerian, July 27, 1977).

In its letter of July 21, the union appeared to be taking some account of the anti-strike atmosphere in the country by declaring that:

> Our action is not and cannot be interpreted to mean a disruption of the national economy but it is an attempt to expose the wrong gradings in the NPA which some of your officers are determined to maintain for reasons that are quite obvious. (R&PT&CSU to NPA, July 21, 1977).

Yet, even after publication of Degree 54 on July 27, the union was still threatening to withdraw labour, now giving a deadline of August 31 (NPA-R&PT&CSU Minutes, August 5, 1977). The threat was repeated at a meeting on August 17. Apparently management was attempting to delay the awards by appealing to the Industrial Court (which had not yet come into existence) and by informing the government that the union's real reason for striking was its compaign against the Controller of Personnel (Ugwuanyi 1978). The union was invited to a meeting with the Ministry of Transport on August 22, and on August 25 there took place one between the Ministry and both parties to the dispute. This led to a common declaration, expressing the confidence of NPA and the R&PT&CSU in each other, and announcing the union's agreement to withdraw its planned action (Transport Ministry Statement, August 25, 1977). Despite this promise, and despite the draconic anti-strike legislation, thousands of the union's members went on strike once again on November 1. Amongst other issues being raised was - once again - the one-eighth award. The action was brought to an end by the intervention of the Ministry of Transport (The Punch, November 4, 1977).

## 14.6. Worker activity during strikes

The meagre information we have on worker activity during strikes within the NPA is not only due to limited sources. It is evident from what the militant rank-and-file leader Ugwuanyi himself writes and says that strikes are seen more as an instrument in the bargaining process than as a form of self-activity of the workers. Ugwuanyi's written account deals at far greater length with the negotiations that proceed and follow strikes than with strike action itself, and its diplomatic handling of the tampering issue suggests that this was not considered a fully legitimate form of activity. Yet, the President of the R&PT&CSU declares

that whilst 'we do not use our power to hold this country to ransom...we go to the whole hog in industrial relations matters' (Interview Notes, December 12, 1976). And Ugwuanyi (1978:5) declares that the role of the union during the one-eighth dispute

> appeared to be that of supporting and encouraging the most militant action on the part of the workers. The union built support by championing the workers' action against exploitation of the NPA management. It offered itself as the vehicle of workers' self-initiative.

What does 'going the whole hog' mean within the NPA? What is the extent of worker militancy and self-initiative? Ugwuanyi admits (Interview Notes, April 1978) that whatever the actions are called, what they usually involve is workers coming to the place of work but remaining inactive. They spend their time reading the papers or chatting. It is rare for them to leave their workplace. He only once recalls drivers having blocked access ways. He only remembers one cross-departmental solidarity action. He recalls threats against 'whitelegs'. But he does not recall violence being used during strike actions either by the authorities against the workers, or by strikers against the authorities. Yet, the fact that the branch leaders approved the cutting off of electricity on one occasion, and that the workers supported those punished and demanded their reinstatement, suggests that workers are prepared to go beyond a merely ritual and routine protest activity. This is confirmed by the one other case for which we have evidence. This was a strike at NPA headquarters which Adebola offered to the Adebiyi Tribunal as an example of the necessity and value of strike action. The nature of Adebola's account is so telling that it must be presented verbatim before we conclude this section. Adebola first explained that they had informed the police of the failure of NPA management to react to a ministerial order of action. He was asked what he then did (Adebiyi Proceedings 1976:26:40-41):

Adebola: Well, we decided right from the Chairman of the Authority to the least officer that they should not go into the building, they should not park their cars inside and we locked the doors.
Chairman: Where was this?
Adebola: NPA Headquarters My Lord. When it was half past nine, then we asked some of our members to bring them into the space where they normally park their cars.
Chairman: All the officers?
Adebola: All the officers, including the General Manager.

Chairman: They carried them or they asked them to march?

Adebola: If they asked them to come and they refuse they know that they are in trouble. They were there. When we were addressing them, then one of them - Estate Manager, Mr. Akindahunsi - said 'look Alhaji, you know we too belong to a sister union like you.[3] It was not our fault, why do you put us in the sun like this?' We had sympathy with him, then we said there are the things, go and see that the management meet. In fairness to the police on that day, maybe as a result of our letter, because we copied Lagos State Commissioner of Police, the Inspector General and everybody, the police did not answer them. I think that was the first time the police would be on the side of the workers.

Chairman: That was a derelection of duty by police.

Adebola: They could not have come sir, because they knew...

Chairman: Because you have locked gates. I have never heard a story like this.

Adebola: We did it sir...

NOTES

1. Parts of this section have appeared in Waterman (1979d and 1980a). I am much indebted to Okeke Ugwuanyi for both his written (1978) and verbal accounts of part of the period covered. However, he additionally provided me with valuable documentation and with useful criticism of earlier versions.

2. Adebola later claimed that he had never made the claim solely on behalf of the quay staff, and NPA management seems to have been unable to prove that he did. In its eventual appeal to the IAT against the way it had worded its judgement, the NPA was obliged to depend on the argument of its own failure to argue against the application of such an award to categories other than quay staff (NPA Statement, April 19, 1973). It seems possible that we have here another example of the superiority of Adebola's legal skills over those of NPA management.

3. Akindahunsi was in 1973 President of the NPA Officers Association (see Table 6.1).

# Chapter 15
# DOCKWORKER PROTEST: SIT-INS, GO-HOMES AND THE HOWLING MOB[1]

In this chapter we will examine a series of strikes or movements distinguished by their place of occurence or type of leadership. These are the unofficial dockwide strike of 1968, the series of radical-led strikes in the 1970s, the moderate-led dockwide strike of December 1976, and the unofficial strikes at Biney's in 1969 and 1975. These are by no means the only strikes that occurred at this time, but they are those for which a certain body of information is available. Many minor dock strikes, and even some major ones, are recorded by no more than a two-inch story in the press. Many others must have gone completely unrecorded. Table 15.1 summarises the data from all available sources.

## 15.1. The unofficial dockwide strike of August 1968

The economic background to this strike was the increasing pressure on Lagos Port caused by the Civil War. Dock employers had had to introduce a 12-hour day of continuous work following the ban on night lighting by the government. There had been a union demand for two separate six-hour shifts, each to be paid as for eight hours. The Port Labour Officer had negotiated such an agreement, whilst insisting that meals and rest-times still be allowed for without disturbing continuous work, and that workers be discouraged from working two consecutive shifts (Labour Review, 3rd Quarter 1967). On June 1 there came into effect the Trade Dispute (Emergency Provisions) Decree. Decree 21 of 1968 severely conditioned the right to strike, but apparently had no effect on the dockworkers. The strike lasted three days and affected 7,000 workers. The official explanation given later for the stoppage was that it was a protest against the reintroduction of 8-hour shifts, with the Ministry of Labour eventually getting workers back by forcing restoration of the 6-hour shifts 'pending further negotiation on the 8-hour system' (NECA Report 1968: Appendix C). The account given by the Urhobo Report (1971: 60-67)[2] is more detailed. The reversion to 8-hour shifts was desired by contractors because they were losing two hours of labour under the 6-hour system. The NPA was also interested in this and had been discussing

## Table 15.1. Chart of reported docker strikes in Lagos, 1968-76

| Dates | Numbers/ Site | Leadership | Issues | Comments | Sources |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 19-21.8.68 | 7,000 General | Informal opposition to Amalgamation | Arbitrary worsening of pay/ hours | Successful. Also leads to replacement of moderate leadership by radical one | See text |
| 2&12.1.69 | 1-200 W.H.Biney | Informal opposition to BSA | Delay in payment December wages; dismissal of leaders | Successful on both issues | See text |
| 3.3.69 | 300 A.Assaf | | Refund of compulsory savings; obligation of maintenance men to work 8 hours | Called off for negotiations | NECA Report 1969 |
| 18-21.7.69 | 6,000 General | Unreported. Probably Radicals | Publication report Urhobo Tribunal; decasualisation; pay, benefits, accident compensation | Called off on beginning of negotiations. NECA reports 15,200 involved for total period of 15 hours | Labour Review, 3rd Quarter 1969; NECA Report 1969 |
| 11.12.69 (2 hours) | 63 A.Assaf | | Removal of headman and replacement by one of workers' choice | Ended on explanation by management | NECA Report 1970 |
| 6-7.7.70 | 50 S.B. Bakare | | Payment of agreed Gowon Bonus; increase in overtime rates | Called off on employer promise to consider demand | NECA Report 1970 |
| 8.2.71 | 10,000 General | Radicals | Adebo interim award and arrears; general grievances | Successful on wage issue | See text |
| 15-17.2.71 | 10,000 General | Radicals | Withdrawal of Gowon Bonus | Outcome uncertain | See text |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 29.12.71 | General | Radicals | Adebo final award; non-recognition of union; Removal of PLO | Successful on wage issue | See text |
| 17-18.5.72 | 9,500 General | Radicals | Decasualisation; conditions | Clashes with police and arrest of leaders outcome not known | See text |
| 12-14.8.72 | 458 Scanship | | Management refusal to permit union adviser to negotiate | Strike probably by dock labour on Scanship ship | NCA Report 1972 |
| 20-23.5.74 | 6,000 General | Radicals | Decasualisation; recognition; 50% wage increase | Clashes with police; strike gains certain de facto recognition for Radicals | See text |
| Sept.1974 (4 days) | | Radicals | | | See text |
| 8-10.1.75 | General | Radicals | Udoji award | Gains award and arrears; Radicals rewarded financially by dockers and gain further de facto recognition | See text |
| 12.2.75 | S.B.Biney | BSA encouraged | Prompt payment of Udoji to labour; extension of increases to staff | Successful on both counts | See text |
| 14.7.75 | 185 H. Stephens | | Reinstatement of sacked workers; better conditions | Strike probably by dock labour on a Henry Stephens company ship | New Nigerian, 19.7.75 |
| 1.9.75 | 1,000 Nasara Co. | Radicals | Failure to pay full Udoji award | | See text |
| 14-16.12.76 | General | Moderates | Payment of agreed 5-day-week award before Xmas | Successful | See text |

reversion with the employers on May 25. When the night-lighting ban was eased by Government in August, NPA decided to return to the 8-hour shift. Despite earlier agreement that reversion should take place 'when the Government so directs', the PLO was only informed officially of the change by NPA one day before the strike, but

> the most pathetic part...was that nobody thought it was an important enough event to inform the dockworkers either publicly or through their leaders (...) There is no doubt, therefore, that the mishandling of the notice to revert to the former system was the last straw that broke the dockworkers' back and they resisted by going on strike. (64-5)

The last straws also included the failure to operate effectively the long-awaited labour relations and dock labour machinery, and the general breakdown of the Amalgamation, which had finally led to the raid on its offices by Endeley Olagboshe on August 9.

The leaders of the ADWT&GWU were down on the quays on the 19th and knew that the strike was brewing. M.I. Eluma (1969) reports that he went there with Abam on that day 'on the usual visit to educate the workers about the dock labour scheme'. Their response to dockworker agitation over the change in hours was to complain unsuccessfully to the PLO, and then retire to the union office to carry out the negotiation procedure he had advised. Knowing about the anti-strike decree, they decided to call an emergency meeting advising patience till the union had met with the employers. It was not until he read the papers on the following day that Eluma knew that the strike had started!

The strike broke out on the afternoon of August 19. A.R.D. Oriola, a leader of the Amalgamation, described how it reached Customs Quay.

> after the commencement of work on the day of the strike some gang-men who had come from the Apapa Quays to work on a ship shouted noisy exhortation to the Akere Section of dockworkers to join the strike which had been started at the Apapa Quays for more pay, expulsion of contractors from the docks and removal of the union leaders. The intervention of Nigerian Ports Authority officials in the commotion was ineffective and the police stepped in to clear the wharf. (46).

A somewhat different account of the strike was given by Nkamare, the representative of the labour contractors. He claimed that

> The particular strike was a very unusual kind. Because instead of workers refusing to work a few thugs beat workers from their places of work hurling bottles at them. When workers still resisted, police and other security-men advised that it was in their interest to stop work. (29).

Disu Sumonu, a former organiser of the Amalgamation, and later a member of the Committee of Ten, stated that

> The strike was on before he knew about it. He was reporting for the afternoon duty shift and discovered that the strike was on and he was forced to keep out. On the following day [August 20] when he came down from the bus he met one Ayo Ige and Willie[3] and others. Together they chartered a bus for £1.13s. to go to the ULC office to report the strike. (54).

This account was confirmed by the ULC, which declared that its efforts to arrange a negotiated settlement failed because of the influence of the socialist intellectuals, Toyo and Kolagbodi.[4] The ULC declared further that

> When all efforts to get the men back to work failed, and the influence behind the strike became clearer, Congress then made a press statement dissociating itself from the action of the dockworkers. (25).

The meaning of this statement was clarified by Toyo. He said that whilst meeting with the dockworkers (on the 20th?),

> they heard on the radio that Alhaji Adebola had called off the strike. That made the workers laugh. The next morning, however, the strike was called off. (53).

Amongst the 'efforts to get the men back to work' were those undertaken at Oriola's section, Customs Quay:

> On the second day of the strike, the people from Apapa came to the wharf to prevent people from working although the union leaders told the workers to refrain from joining the strike because it had been caused by some irresponsible canoeboys. (47).

Whether these people were Abam, Khayam and Eluma we do not know. What we do know from Eluma's account is that because of the 'unconstitutional action of the strike which I timed [sic] illegal', the three of them went

down to Apapa to see what was happening. A friendly docker warned them that there was a trheat to kidnap them if they attempted to enter the wharf or call off the strike. The warning was too late:

> there was a waiting bus van for the kidnapping near the bus stop. Mr. Abeke held me and my suitcase bag was carried away, [and I was] pushed into a pit where I sustained injuries on my foot, and brother Khayam, Abam and myself were being dragged to the waiting van. It was at the stage an army corporal rescued us instead, in the army landrover to Apapa police station where we lodged our complaints. As the landrover was moving the group led by Mr. Webber Abeke, were shouting this slogan. Army take them kill them, for they are Agents to contractors, NPA and Government, they want 8 hours back.

The reference to Abeke gives us the only name of someone evidently involved in the organisation of the strike. Abeke, however, was not identified with the Joint Committee of Toyo and Kolagbodi, but rather with the Committee of Ten that was appealing to the ULC. So what role was the Joint Committee playing in the strike?

On August 16 the two socialist intellectuals were seen in the docks, giving rise to charges by Khayam, the ULC and others that they had instigated the strike, supported it with £N560, encouraged the kidnapping of the union leaders, etc. T.A. Ayorinde said that he had heard Toyo say that if the leaders of the Amalgamation came down to Customs Quay they should be beaten up. Toyo himself admitted to having been in the docks on the 16th, but claimed that his role was solely that of advisor to the Joint Committee and his presence on that day had had nothing to do with the strike. As for his role during the strike itself, Toyo denied that he had done more than to help resolve it:

> One evening in August [20th?], Bajare[5] who was an active member of the Joint Committee came to him at his residence at City Way and informed him that there was a strike at the docks...He helped the workers to resolve the strike and to go back to work when the employers agreed to continue with the emergency six hours shifts. The workers were reluctant to go back to work as they wanted to use the opportunity to resolve the disagreement with the Contract Labour System. He advised them to call off the strike since it was a military regime and they had no organisation strong enough to fight their course [sic]. (53).

It may be that Toyo was dissimulating through fear of being held responsible for the strike, yet his account is consistent with the role of a sympathetic but powerless external advisor.[6]

According to Oriola, news of the end of the strike was brought by 'some of the troublemakers who claimed that their demands had been met by the government.(47) Again, no names are given, although it may be that the settlement was negotiated by those who were now calling themselves the 'Accredited Representatives' or 'Committee of Ten', since the Labour Ministry was dealing with them later. In the absence of further information one can only assume that the strike was provoked and led by an informal grouping that was variously or serially seeking aid and advice from the socialist intellectuals or the moderate-reformist trade union centre.

The incoherence of the worker militants, the failure of the socialist intellectuals to lead them, and of the ULC to control them, meant that neither of the two committees crystalised into an alternative leadership after the strike. The vacuum was filled by Endeley Olagboshe and his group, who found their external support in the communist NTUC.

## 15.2. The radical-led strike movement, 1971-5

From 1969 till 1973 there was no moderate organisation in the docks, and from 1973 to 1975 the moderates were avoiding strike action and condemning it. Although there were a number of strikes before 1971 (see Table 15.1), and although it may be assumed that the bigger ones took place under the leadership of the ADWT&GWU(N), the first one we know to have been so led is the Adebo strike of February 1971. At the end of 1970, tension was rising in Nigeria over the expected report of the Wages and Salaries Review Commission appointed by government in July. The Adebo Commission was forced by the central trade union organisations (temporarily united in the United Committee of Central Labour Organisations) to issue an Interim Report on December 4 (Adebo 1970). This led to a 'Cost of Living Allowance' backdated for the previous nine months. Trouble was caused by the fact that the Commissioner for Labour, Anthony Enahoro, had stated that only such private sector firms as had paid no increases since 1964 were expected to pay the full COLA. This caused an uncoordinated but nationwide wave of strikes in the private sector in January and February 1971.[7] This seems to have had its effect in the docks.

On February 8 there was a 'sit-down action' by 10,000 dockers against non-payment of the Adebo award and for redress of accumulated grievances. They also demanded overtime arrears, night overtime, a one-hour paid break and release of four men held for incitement

(Daily Times, February 10). The report of this strike indicated that the Secretary of the ADWT&GWU(N) was now Bernard Odulana. On February 15-17, 1971, there occured a major three-day stoppage, involving 10,000 workers. According to the NECA Report (1971: Appendix C), causes were the withdrawal by the Ports Manager of an incentive award and 'Restoration of a 6-hour shift as against the 8-hour shift introduced by the Military Ports Commandant'. What the workers were probably protesting against was the imposition of six hours pay for a six-hour shift. Probably Government felt that the Adebo award should not come in addition to those benefits that the workers had earlier gained. However, it was the attempt to impose the six-hours pay that had been responsible for the 1968 strike. Whether the workers were again successful on this issue is not clear, but the two-shilling 'Gowon incentive award' was still being maintained at the end of the year (NPA Minutes, December 19, 1971).

When, later in 1971, the final Adebo Report and government white paper on it appeared, the dockers were to receive only a 9-10d increase. The union protested bitterly against this and 'rejected outright this final award' (ADWT&GWU(N) Statement, October 27, 1971). On December 29, it organised what appears to have been a one-day stoppage. This was less a demand for a higher rate of pay than a protest against the non-payment of the new rates and the customary arrears. Other issues raised during the dispute were the non-recognition of the union, removal of the Port Labour Officer, working conditions, etc. (Nigerian Observer, January 3, 1972). On the day of the strike the NPA called a meeting with contractors, directing that agreements with workers over payment of the award be deposited with NPA, and that the new rates, with - if possible - the arrears, be paid within two days (NPA Minutes, December 29, 1971). The NPA then held a three-hour meeting with the radical leaders at which the following decisions were announced: the new rates would be paid before December 31, with any arrears remaining to be paid before January 6; there would be no victimisation of strikers; the demand for removal of the PLO would be forwarded; NPA would take up the issue of recognition of the ADWT&GWU(N) with the authorities. Whilst an NPA spokesman deplored the strike and described it as an 'attempt to subvert the country's economy', a union leader said that it was 'motivated by the lukewarm attitude of the authority to the workers' problems. (Nigerian Observer, January 3, 1972). The union appears to have abandoned its 'outright' rejection' of the small final award and to have struck over a more immediate grievance with a more easily obtainable outcome. The year end is the time at which dockers feel most hardly pressed for ready cash for Muslim or Christian festivities, and the uncertainty over, or delay in, paying the award (for which responsibility lay as

much in the hands of the NPA as in those of the contractors) was a ready provocation to action. As for the general and longterm complaints, the union was appeased with promises which meant, in effect, nothing. The issue of non-recognition was to remain a major stimulus to strike action by the radical leaders in the years to come.

Apart from a two-day strike in May 1972, there appears to have been no major stoppage in that year or the following one. The May 1972 stoppage was about the introduction of the integrated labour scheme, and on lavatories and drinking taps at the quays (Labour Ministry Disputes Register). During this strike, union President Endeley Olagboshe was arrested at gun point by military police. He later claimed to have been held in a maximum security prison for 12 months (Interview Notes, August 1975). Clashes with the police were to remain a feature of dockworker strikes for some time. As for any positive outcome of the strike we have no information.

In early 1974 the ADWT&GWU(N) was demanding that government negotiate with it on the proposed dock labour scheme and stating that the 'dockers would not accept responsibilities for any industrial situation created by the refusal' (Nigerian Tribune, February 27, 1974). It further demanded an interim wage award of 50 percent. We saw in Chapter 4 that the union was mobilising the dockers by issuing leaflets and calling mass meetings on the quays, and that fighting broke out with leaders of the moderates at this time. On May 9 Odulana issued a seven-day strike warning. On May 15 he and three of his officers were invited to the Ministry of Labour and treated to a dressing down. The Ministry's statement contained the following significant elements: 1) there was a wage freeze on; 2) there was no evidence of an attempt by the union at collective bargaining with the employers on the issues raised; 3) that, given the existence of three registered unions in the docks, the declaration of a dispute by such an unregistered group was not provided for; 4) that strikes were illegal. He appealed to the union leaders to await government action on integration and wages. In response,

> Mr. Bernard Odulana promised to convey the advice of the Assistant Director of Labour to the dock workers and to ensure that they pursue their claims in accordance with the provisions of the law and without resort to the threatened industrial action'. (Labour Ministry Statement, May 15, 1974).

In fact, Odulana seems to have done nothing of the kind. On May 20 there began a strike which three days later involved 6,000 workers. The event became violent:

> a meeting of the representatives of the workers with the ports manager...reached a deadlock as 25 demonstrating dockworkers were arrested...By afternoon, armed policemen stood at alert at strategic positions in the wharf as a skeleton staff toiled away at the day's work. A dock superintendent...denied an allegation by some of the strikers that they had been teargassed by the police. A man who could not give satisfactory answer to his mission in the wharf when challenged by the police was immediately whisked away to the police station. (Daily Times, May 23, 1974).

Negotiations with NPA took place on May 23, at which it became evident that the major issue was that of non-recognition of the union. Port Manager Tukur promised to take up the issue, to ensure wage payment for the days on strike, and to attempt to get the arrested dockers released (NPA Statement, May 23, 1974). Following the strike the Ministry signed a joint communique with the Amalgamation, and in mid-June the union was referring to this in calling urgently for a tripartite meeting in the docks. In July there were negotiations between Odulana and the Port Labour Officer. (Daily Times, July 26, 1974). Thus, despite the direct flouting of the law of the land and the instructions of the Ministry, the strike seems to have forced the latter to come to terms with the radicals. Yet, despite the de facto recognition, the union was unable to get formal recognition from the government, or from the dock labour contractors. On the other hand, the radicals had probably increased their influence and prestige amongst the dockworkers, since they had managed to strike not only despite government but also despite the indirect opposition of the moderates, and the direct strike-breaking threat of the BSA (Daily Times, May 20 and New Nigerian, June 1, 1974). There was yet another four-day dock strike at the beginning of September (Daily Express, September 6, 1974). And at the end of the month, Odulana was again giving a seven-day ultimatum to the contractors (Sunday Times, September 22, Daily Times, September 30, 1974). In this case the threatened action seems not to have taken place.

The reason for all this activity was the expectations raised by the Udoji Commission that was to report in 1974. Although this was not strictly a wage commission, it was known that Udoji would recommend public sector wage increases, and the dockworkers probably felt it necessary to stake their claim before the report appeared. In December there finally appeared the report of the Udoji Commission and the government white paper on it (Udoji Report 1974; FRN Views 1974).

The latter established a new official minimum wage for public sector workers, this amounting to a doubling from N1 to N2 per day. On January 1, 1975, Bernard Odulana of the ADWT&GWU(N) addressed his customary utlimatum to the Ministry. This tried to play its customary buckpassing role. We know (Chapter 7, Section 2) that on January 3 Abam's union was inviting the Biney and Bakare unions to meet with it at Chief Beyioku's office and in the meantime advising against strike action. Meanwhile the radicals were continuing with their preparations. Following another 24 hours of grace on January 7, the dockers struck work on January 8 for some three days. On this occasion there was no violence since the union adopted the tactic of sending all but a few pickets home. The strike was effective. On January 10 the Port Manager wrote to the union that 'in accordance with the tradition of the Port in matters of Government Salaries and Wages Awards', he could assure it that the award and arrears would be paid partly at the end of January and the rest by February 15 (NPA to ADWT&GWU(N), January 10, 1975). On the eleventh, eight of the dock employers signed a confirming agreement in the presence of the PLO, ensuring also that there would be no victimisation and that dockworkers would be paid for the strike days (ADWT-&GWU(N)-Dock Employers Agreement, January 11, 1975). All that the moderates could do was to complain that Odulana had 'played on the sentiment' of the workers and 'misdirected' them to a 'premature industrial action'. With N100-200 back-pay in their pockets, the dockers generously rewarded the leaders they considered responsible for their gains. Both the NPA and the contractors signed further agreements with the union, and in the following months it appeared as if informal bilateral bargaining between the union and individual contractors was finally becoming established. The success and recognition evidently went to the heads of the radicals and in May they signed the declaration of identification with national goals and support for industrial peace quoted in Chapter 7, Section 3. The peace declaration should not be understood too literally, for in September the radicals supported a strike by 1,000 dockers working for Nasara (Nigerian Observer, September 2, 1975). But in the following year it was doing more to prevent strikes than to stimulate them.

## 15.3. The moderate-led strike of December 1976

Whilst the radicals had become more moderate as a result of their 1975 success, the moderates had become more and more frustrated at the refusal of government, contractors and the NPA to take them seriously. Despite their evident inexperience with the organisation of strikes, their long opposition to them and their lack of a close relationship with the dockers, they had in January 1976 made their first - unsuccessful - attempt to organise one. That one had been foiled by

the combined efforts of the radicals, the NPA and the police. Whilst we see both moderates and radicals apparently involved in similar and simultaneous negotiations with the authorities in 1976, the negotiations had different implications for both parties. For the radicals their first experience of taking an issue through the machinery to the IAP must have been giving them a sense both of official recognition and of responsibility. For the moderates it was a customary procedure, any positive results of which were likely to rebound to the credit of their adversaries. At stake was the extension to dockers of the five-day week introduced for public-sector workers on April 1, 1976. The anxiety of the moderates to call a strike over this issue is indicated in Chapter 7, Section 2. The success of the attempt I was able to witness for myself.[8]

The pretext for the strike was the forthcoming Integrated Cargo-Handling Scheme (ICHS), under which most existing contractors would disappear. A.E. Okon stated before the strike that if the scheme was brought in before the contractors had paid the nine months arrears, the workers would never see the money. It must have been either this reasonable proposition or the customary worker anxiety to get extra cash to cover the December festivities that made workers ready to strike. At twelve o'clock on December 14 a number of men ran along the quayside calling on the workers to strike. A few stones were thrown at NPA shed staff and at contractor offices, in the latter case breaking windows. One or two cars were damaged. A couple of tough-looking labourers stood between the sheds with broken wooden staves in their hands, threatening any NPA worker whose head appeared out of a shed door. At 12.30 the NPA sheds were locked 'as a precaution against looting'. From the main gates people came running with handkerchiefs to their faces, shouting that teargas shells had been fired. By 1.00 the quayside was deserted. The whole dock labour force had gone home.

At an Apapa restaurant a half dozen moderate leaders were later to be seen discussing the strike together. One described the preparations:

> It was decided at a mass meeting on Saturday. 300 met from the different areas of contract. They were addressed by Okon and Abam.

Another described the morning's events:

> I was there at 6.00. Odulana's outfit was there...Endeley was beaten up. He was forced out to the roundabout. Jaja was chased away. They arrested Tunde. Some people were arrested for puncturing tyres or being armed with sticks.

An argument broke out over whether the union had called the strike or not. One man said, 'We didn't call them out, they went out. We only organise them'. Evidently he was anxious about the leaders being held responsible for an illegal action. Another was quite happy to admit responsibility:

> It is a dispute with the contractors. We call workers out because contractors promise to pay today. It is the first time we have call a successful general dock strike at Apapa!

Another argument took place over the production of a statement. There was uncertainty about what should go in it, where a typewriter could be found to type it, whether an agency should be paid to type it out. The group was elated, confused and anxious simultaneously. As two leaders began to speak to each other in their own tongue, another insisted angrily that they 'talk the common language' (English or Pidgin).

On the following day, December 15, the manager of a major contracting company was in a state of desperation. He had received the new rates at only 4.00 the previous day. It would take him three weeks to work them out and to pay the arrears. The NPA, he said, had messed up the whole business. In the first place it had no right to make an agreement with the unions before the shipping companies had also agreed to pay the extra rates (a by-now traditional NPA practice). In the second place the NPA had agreed to a one-fifth increase but only paid contractors one-sixth. As for the strike:

> The workers went mad, smashing windows and cars, and beating people. The workers are a howling mob. They've got a low boiling point. They are organised by militants - the semi-educated tally clerks. The trouble is that the tally clerks are protected by the Pool. They are responsible to nobody and you can't discipline them. Imagine! The Pool should be bust up.

Thomas Olushipo, General Secretary of the BSA, was down on the quay on the 15th. He seemed to be taking his distance from the events:

> They just call a strike. They smash windows in our offices. We can't do anything about it. We will just wait and see.

Apparently he felt he had no control or influence over the Biney labour, which had totally disappeared from the quay along with the others. Jetty labourers employed by Biney's at a site one or two miles from the

regular quays declared that someone from the Biney union had told them to go on strike and threatened them with violence if they did not do so. It seems possible that such an action might have been taken unofficially by a BSA leader, since they would also benefit from the increase demanded.

On the morning of the same day a leader of the radicals gave his account of the events leading up to the strike and the strike itself.[9] Two or three days previously a Principal Labour Officer from the Ministry had been sent to them to find out who was behind the rumoured strike. The radicals had informed both him and the officer in charge of the police in the port that they had nothing to do with it and were opposed to it. Following the outbreak of the strike the day before, the NPA had called in both Odulana and Abam. Abam had denied calling the strike and claimed not to know who had done so. Odulana had told Abam that there was a security report out against him because security-men (i.e. plainclothes police) had been at his meeting a few days previously. Odulana had also accused Abam of organising the strike and condemned him for having done so. My informant revealed a certain annoyance with Odulana and with the disorganisation of the radical leadership in general:

> You see, Bernard is never there when you need him! We decided to produce a leaflet about the agreement with NPA about five days ago, and also to call a meeting of dockers. But we couldn't produce the leaflet because of the problem of no letter-heading paper due to the absence of the Treasurer who has it.

He said there was to be a meeting that day to approve the wording of a leaflet, which would then be typed and duplicated on unheaded paper if necessary. He condemned Abam for the way the strike had been called and the tactics used:

> We don't <u>hide</u> it when we go on strike. We always <u>state</u> it. We give ultimatum, as in the law...You must have material and moral support for a strike. Not just the tally clerks who are behind this one. The tally clerks don't support morally and financially. They are unstable. They go from one leader to another. The dockworkers are more stable...We don't attack people when we go on strike like they did. We don't resort in violence. We don't destroy. We organise and educate them so there is no violence. You know they had to <u>force</u> out Biney workers?

Down at the port gates at 1.00 there were few workers to be seen. A couple of scrawled signs were

leaning against the fence of the Port Labour Office: 'DOCKERS WERE NOT SLAVES', 'NO DOCKERS, NO NPA', and even one in French. Supporters of the radical leadership were there in force. They pushed and chased off a man they accused of attempting to spy on their conversations. At 3.00 two radicals were handing out a leaflet signed by Odulana. This declared:

> Our attention had been drawn to misguided industrial action which was caused by a group of confusionists in Lagos Docks...[S]urprising we witnessed rioting/assault which resulted to stoppage of work at Apapa Quays. Our investigation revealed that a group of confusionists had gone round spreading false rumour that the new wages would be paid on December 14 contrary to our agreement. In view of the above we call on the Federal Military Government to institute a High Powered Inquiry into this action with a view of bringing to book those that were responsible for the strike. (ADWT&GWU(N) Statement, December 15, 1976).

A group of dockers approached the leafletters:

> What is this paper?...It is from Odulana...He is a confusionist...We want our money...They promised to pay...

The group then began pushing and punching the two radicals who (since the balance of forces at the gate had changed) finally retreated to where NPA securitymen were on duty.

At 3.30, one of the radical leaders began discussing the strike with a man introduced as being 'from Lion Building' (i.e. a plainclothes policeman). They talked about the police searching for Abam and his group, about Odulana having been called in, but convincing them that he had no responsibility for the strike. After a few minutes of such conversation, the radical leader climbed onto the policeman's motorbike and rode off with him.

At 6.00 the same evening the dispute was settled by the promise of the contractors to pay the arrears on the 20th. Somehow the news was passed to the dockworkers, since at 6.00 the following morning (December 16) they were back at work. Tally clerks at the Port Labour Office knew that the strike had been organised by Abam. Other workers were not so sure. The consensus at Biney's quayside offices was that it had been organised by Abam. At those of Aronjim the majority thought it had been led by Odulana. At the Port Labour Office, one solitary radical turned up. The tally clerks began to shout at him:

> Imagine a trade union leader who is against workers getting more money! Shame on you! You should go! Aren't you ashamed?

The radical showed every sign of acute discomfort, turning his back on his tormentors and hiding himself in his newspaper. The Daily Times of December 16 and 17 reported the beginning and end of what it termed a 'work-to-rule', announcing the new rate for dockers to have been raised from N2.42 to N2.91, with the arrears to be paid out on December 21. According to Jonas Abam, the arrears amounted in some cases to N250 (Interview Notes, April 1977).

Whilst the moderates were cock-a-hoop, the radicals were deeply humiliated. Said one of them a couple of days later,

> All the dockworkers want is money. They are not matured. We were afraid of Animashaun.[10] The others [Abam's group. PW] deceived the workers. We could have countered them as before, in January.

In fact, it appears as if the radicals did use the same tactics as on that occasion. According to Abam,

> One of our guys was dragged out of his house, beaten up and had his clothes ripped by Odulana's boys, who then took him to a police station where he was held without anyone knowing this for three days. (Interview Notes, April 1977).

Furthermore, several of his supporters had been charged with incitement, although the charges were later dropped.

It is difficult to assess the impact of this event since it was rapidly followed by the reorganisation of the industry under thr ICHS. This meant not only the disappearance of most of the contractors, but their replacement by the NCHC. On the same occasion on which he made the above statement, Abam claimed that the 'dash' following the strike success had come to his union, and that it had thus had wide recognition amongst the dockers. At the time that he was saying this, he was walking with me along the waterfront for half an hour and over a distance of several hundred yards. During this time, he was greeted by only three people. Evidently, such success as his organisation had won three months earlier had not turned him into a popular hero amongst the dockers.

One or two immediate comments are needed on statements made by the competing leaderships. The extent of

the change of roles is evident, with the moderates grasping at a pretext (December 14 being, as they knew, the date for rate announcement, not payout), agitating the dockers, using violence (or recruiting others to do so), and the radicals denouncing violence, condemning 'confusionists', cooperating with the police, appealing to government to punish the strike leaders, fearing to take strike action, and denouncing the instability of the tally clerks or the immaturity of the labourers. At the same time, we must recognise the secretive and cautious way in which the moderates went about their action. The 'mass meeting' which is said to have called for it, was in fact only attended by 15-20 men,[11] there was no public strike call or mobilisation of the dockers and the moderates were in two minds over whether to deny responsibility for the strike or claim the credit for it! These features are in clear contrast with what we know of the radicals' tactics.

## 15.4. Two unofficial strikes at Biney's, 1969 and 1975

The first of these events[12] links up with the dockwide strike of 1968 not only in point of time but also in that its apparent leader, Paul Edah, had been a member of the Committee of Ten. The background to the event is provided, again, by the needs of workers for extra cash with which to celebrate the Christian and Muslim festivals. Apparently the BSA had agreed with management that three weeks wages would be paid on December 20th, with the balance at the end of January. Evidently it had forgotten that the labourers would be unable to wait that long after having spent all their money celebrating. On December 30 the BSA leaders requested that the last week's money be paid earlier. They were told to return for an answer on January 3. But on January 2 a group of workers came to the main offices of the company 'in a very riotous manner' to demand earlier payment. When the strike leaders were questioned, more details came out. Biney had at this time announced an end to wage advances. Moreover, some other contractors had already paid out their workers. And, 'The truth was that the men were already out of pocket and were suffering for money'. About 100 men had gone to the Burma Road offices. Only four were admitted, the door being locked behind them. Whilst the four inside were negotiating, those outside were trying to force the door. When management promised to pay up, the strike leaders

> went out downstairs and delivered the promise to the men, but it was at the request of the majority who said they would neither trust us nor the management with verbal but [only with] written [guarantees], before we had to come up to you again and demanded written undertaking.

The management felt obliged to sign its promise, and the group thereupon dispersed, returning to the wharf to boast that it had been able to achieve what the BSA had not. Management then decided to pay before the agreed date so as to 'strengthen and safeguard' the dignity of the BSA. At the same time, it decided to sack the four spokesmen plus two others. Chief Biney explained how the names got on to the list:

> He said that he was told that Olabode Ottun, Raufu Aremu, James Ojime and Okanlawon Alabi led 'on-board' workers to Burma Road offices and behaved in a riotous manner. He then decided that the leaders should be disciplined, and remembering past activities of people like Paul Edah and Alfred Duru, he concluded that although these men did not show up at Burma Road, they couldn't be unconnected with the incident. This is how your names got into the termination list...

When the six found out they had been sacked, they reported back to their followers. Said one of them,

> Our members viewed it on Saturday that if it is not victimisation why was it that only the six of us out of all those who visited Burma Road should be terminated. If the termination is because of our role played on January 2, 1969 then, they too would not work, they all should be terminated and, the on-board men then refused to work.

The leaders then went and reported the affair to the police station and, whilst there, heard that the police had already been informed of the second strike by Biney's Personnel Officer. A few minutes later

> we saw 12 policemen who arrested some of us. There was confusion. Mr Savage [a Biney manager. PW] was begging us to return to work but we said we cannot while some of us are being taken away by the police. Mr Savage then spoke to the policemen and secured the release of us.

Biney then realised that the strike leaders had popular support and decided to suspend the dismissals 'for the time being'. Anxious to restore the damaged image of the BSA, he then proposed that it should play a role of 'go-between' and get the strike leaders to both apologise and promise to behave themselves in the future. Whilst the BSA leaders condemned the labourers who struck as 'ignorants', and promised to educate them better, it also begged management to give the union 'maximum cooperation' by granting some of its previous demands. Biney then directed on the spot that all

tally clerks should get 'five shillings increment if they have not actually committed any offence'.

Further sessions of the inquiry were used to enable the strike leaders to air their criticism of the BSA, to raise general complaints about conditions and to apologise for their behaviour. Edah tendered apology for the actions and begged management to pardon his supporters. This was apparently considered insufficient. He was asked to put his apology into writing and immediately agreed to do so. Despite this act of abject contrition (essential if the men were to avoid being sacked and blacklisted) the strikes were quite successful: the first had achieved its immediate purpose and the second one had protected the strike leaders. One or two of the leaders were later absorbed into Biney staff and/or the BSA (e.g. Alabi) and others were probably eased out quietly later. Whatever the outcome, it seems to have marked a certain milestone in the history of the company. Biney had said that it had never happened in the history of the company 'that demands by its workers were met under duress'. Although he might have taken measures to ensure that this would not happen again, it is evident that it was precisely under duress that Biney had been obliged to concede worker demands.

We know that both before and after this event the BSA condemned strike action. Yet during the Udoji campaign in early 1975 it came very close to organising a strike amongst Biney labourers and staff. Whilst the moderates were playing their traditional role, the BSA was apparently changing its own one. It first asked management for assurance that it intended to pay Udoji rates to all labour and demanded that the arrears be paid on January 17, as with government employees (BSA to General Manager, January 2, 1975). Although the new rates had been announced on January 23, the Biney workers had evidently not been paid out by the end of that month. Moreover, the new rates applied to dock labour, not to contractor staff. Whilst the labourers might have been content to wait for their promised increases, Biney staff (amongst whom were those junior supervisors who dominate the BSA) could not. On February 1, there was a meeting of the 'entire members of the Union' (probably meaning the EC) and the 'entire workers of the company'. This demanded a 100 percent increase in staff salaries, with the backpay to be handed over on February 12. The new rates and backpay for the labourers were to be paid on February 14. It warned management to 'avert any further crisis and industrial disputes' and threatened that 'there is no going back from these demands' (BSA to Biney, February 4, 1975). In the absence of action by management, it appears that both workers and staff went on strike on February 12.[13] Union President Katsina claimed that he had no advance knowledge of the strike and had

called a meeting to explain to the workers that the BSA was to meet management that afternoon. The workers, he claimed, were unsatisfied with the assurance and insisted on following the leaders to the meeting at Burma Road,

> and after the meeting which lasted four hours some of the strikers disagreed with the orders of the Union leaders and refused to leave Burma Road premises. It is likely that these are the people who threatened the General Manager in the absence of the Union leaders.

The threat seems to have been effective, the GM being forced to give a written undertaking that payment would be made on February 21. Biney was furious. A meeting was called to discuss the event and to negotiate the still remaining issue of staff pay. Here,

> The Managing Director expressed displeasure for this incident because over the 60 years of the Company's existence its staff had never engaged in strike action over anything whatsoever...

He demanded an explanation for the action. Whilst Katsina paid his respects to the management and apologised profusely for the strike (which he, also, described as the first in the history of the company) he did not condemn it. Since we know that there had been other strikes in the company, it appears that what Biney was furious about was the involvement of company staff and the BSA. Even if the latter had not organised the strike, it had been agitating the labour force and making threats. It seems likely that it was not as sorry about its occurrence as it made out. Having expressed the ritual apologies, the BSA got down to what it was really interested in, the issue of staff pay. In reply to its 100 percent demand, Biney offered 30. Before the meeting was over, the BSA had gratefully accepted 40. The main effect on the BSA may have been to give its leaders a greater sense of the value of trade union organisation and action than previously. But, if so, this was only on behalf of supervisory staff not of the labourers it had stimulated to action.

## 15.5. Worker activity during strikes

Evidently, dockworker strikes are more dramatic and violent than those within NPA. Does the volatility of the workforce, however, suggest a higher level of mass activity? The best evidence we have of mass activity comes from the 1969 Biney strike, where numbers of workers took effective action not only for improvements in conditions but also to defend their informal leaders. The portwide strike in 1968 seems to

have also represented a largely spontaneous action, initiated or stimulated - but hardly led - by one or more of the informal groups opposed to the Amalgamation. Beyond the cessation of work and some violence to property or persons, mass activity seems to have been strictly limited. The 'go home' strategy of the 1970s seems only to have formalised the mass inactivity. Thus, the greater drama of dockworker strikes compared with those of the portworkers seems to have resided rather in their generality and their occasional violence than in any high level of mass activity during the actions. Moreover, one must recognise the severe limitations on such spontaneous activity as there was. In the absence of effective and recognised leadership, the portwide dock strike of 1968 reaped strictly limited benefits. It took several years before the Nigerian state felt obliged to take permanent account of worker protest. Similarly, the Biney strike of 1969 reaped only shortterm benefits. Permanent and effective defence of dockworker interests within the company would have required an organisation. In the absence of such an organisation such action as they took in 1975 was available as a resource to be exploited for the benefit of the junior supervisory staff who controlled the BSA.

NOTES

1. Parts of this chapter have appeared in slightly different form in Waterman 1976 and 1979a.

2. Except where otherwise indicated the account of this strike comes from this source. References are therefore given by page number alone.

3. Samuel Ayo Ige and Willie Aghoruntse were also members of the Committee of Ten that crystalised during the strike. The efforts these three made to end it together with the ULC suggest that the Committee of Ten was not the organiser or leader of the strike - a matter to be discussed later.

4. These had been active in the docks in the period 1963-6, of course, but by 1967 the effort to create an independent socialist party (NLP) and trade union centre (LUF) had run out of momentum. Their contact with dockworker activists at this time may well have been the last that they had with any workers before the NLP faded out of existence.

5. 'Bajare' is evidently E. Bajere, Chairman of the short-lived 'Dockworkers Apapa Branch' of an equally short-lived R&PT&DWUN in 1964. He seems to have retained his political relationship with the two socialist intellectuals till 1968, at

which date it was being said that he was employed by Kolagbodi's fishery cooperative.

6. The Urboho tribunal did not consider the evidence sufficient to prove that Toyo and Kolagbodi had been responsible for the strike, and seemed more sympathetic to the notion that they had only given £N10 to help to call it off. The final judgement of the tribunal on the pair throws light on the conventional Nigerian view of the relationship between worker struggle and socialist theory:

> The...group is an anomally in the docks ...It was quite clear...that Mr Toyo and Dr Kolagbodi were interested in unity among the dockworkers not merely to improve their bargaining strength and their conditions of service but because they hoped that the workers so organised would be instrumental in bringing about a Socialist Government in Nigeria which they were interested in promoting. (Urhobo Report 1971:69).

7. For a general account of the Adebo affair, see Cohen 1974:233-7. For a case study of its effects in the Lagos industrial estate of Ikeja, see Peace (1974, 1975, 1979). For Kano, see Lubeck (1975a, b).

8. I had been talking at length with Abam and Odulana just before the event and - like everyone else in the industry - had discounted Abam's intention and capacity to call a strike. I was, however, on the Apapa Quays when the strike broke out. Furthermore, the moderates were using as their headquarters a restaurant at which I ate (and which was run by an ex-trade unionist ethnically related to one of the moderate leaders). I spent much of the next couple of days down at the quays, where I was able to speak to the radical activists, as well as to supporters of Abam. I also spoke frequently, and at length, to a manager of one of the contracting companies.

9. He took me away from the Port Labour Office at the port gates and along a disused railwayline to an empty bar. Here he felt he could talk to me without being observed or overheard.

10. A reference to action taken against the union and the person of Alhaji Babs Animashaun. As leader of the nationally unaffiliated National Union of Bank Employees, Animashaun had followed a policy of militant industrial action, much in the spirit of Odulana - or Adebola. It was because of his militancy that the Banking Act was amended so as

to make a ban on trade unionism possible within the banking sector. And it was his union that was the first to be banned, and he himself who was the first to be proscribed when members of it contravened the new Essential Services Legislation in 1976.

11. I am assuming that this is the same 'mass meeting' that Abam had told me he had to address at midday on Saturday, December 5 and the actual attendance at which I was able to observe for myself.

12. The source for this account is the minutes of the inquiry that Biney organised into the events (Biney Minutes, January 13, 15-17, 1969). All quotations are from this source.

13. The account is dependent on the report of the negotiation meeting that followed the strike (Biney-BSA Minutes, February 18, 1975).

# Chapter 16
# ANALYSIS: THE SLOW AND AWKWARD SELF-DEFINITION OF A WORKING CLASS

If the central issue of Part II has been identified as one of strategy, and of Part III as of cleavage, then that of Part IV must be one of relative militancy within our two sectors. In order to consider this issue, we will deal first with what the strike pattern tells us about worker consciousness and capacity, and secondly with what it reveals about strike leadership and strategy. We will then turn to the question of militancy more directly. For the first two aspects we may draw on earlier theorising. For the last we will draw more directly on Chapter 13.

## 16.1. Strikes, consciousness and capacity

With regard to the NPA strikes we must remember two major features of the period we are dealing with. The first is that - possibly as a result of the 1964 experience - the state was making major concessions to public sector workers and involving them in a complex apparatus of formal industrial relations. Neither the Adebo, Udoji or 5-day-week awards required previous industrial action by public sector workers, nor did they require the kind of follow-up action that was demanded in the private sector. The second feature is the failure of the industrial relations machinery at both NPA and national level to deliver the promised goods, and the decreasingly favourable nature of that machinery as time passed. That this was understood is suggested by action taken against their own moderate leadership by the Engineering Department workers in 1972, and by the growing attraction that the more militant R&PT&CSU evidently exercised for these and for others. Evidently, this union was responding to a feeling that existed amongst the workers themselves. The action taken by the workers was little enough (when compared with that of the dockworkers below). Table 14.1 does not reveal the whole story, since it does not indicate clearly how many workers struck in Lagos on each occasion. What we do know is that there were a number of very short actions, that there was not one NPA-wide strike called (that of NMTUF in 1972 did not directly involve R&PT&CSU members who had already won their action), and that several actions of the R&PT&CSU

did not even involve all its members in Lagos. We also know that worker activity during such actions was usually at a low level, requiring nothing more than a reduction to zero of the customary pace of work within the corporation. Before we over-estimate the significance of this low level of involvement and commitment, we should note two factors. The first is that in most cases such limited action was sufficient for its purpose - the application of agreed concessions or the re-activation of stalled negotiations. The second is the preparedness of workers (both clerical and manual), and at least one union, to take the kind of extreme measures noted above. Finally, it must be remembered that in taking strike action the workers were well aware that they were flouting the law of the land.

What of the dockworker strikes? That strikes here were a simple and direct expression of dockworker dissatisfaction is, perhaps, suggested by the number that took place at the end or beginning of each year. A number of the strikes took place explicitly over the need to meet expenses for the festivities. Any possibility of an increase, any delay in a promised one, any doubt about the time or amount of payments due at this time, was liable to provoke dockworkers to direct action. That the strikes were a tool of the dockworkers is further suggested by two other features. One is that moderate (ADWT&GWU(U)) or clientalist (BSA) unions were eventually involved with strikes despite their declared and demonstrated hostility to them. The other is that strikes were more than once used as a weapon against such corrupt or ineffective leaderships. The extent to which the strike was in this period the customary weapon of the Lagos dockworkers is indicated not so much by the frequency of strikes (we can only compare incomplete data after 1968 with even more incomplete data before it), as by the fact that there were 10 general strikes within the nine years shown in Table 15.1. At the same time we must recognise that these strikes demanded neither high commitment nor much sacrifice from the dockers. Three or four days were the maximum for strikes. Dockers were customarily compensated for days lost and protected from victimisation following such actions. The danger of imprisonment or police violence was faced only by a tiny minority of activists. Moreover, the demands were usually modest, as were the successes. Where there were more wide-ranging demands (recognition, decasualisation) these were usually abandoned in practice. The introduction of the 'go home' strike reduced any mass activity even further.

What does this tell us about the consciousness and capacity of the workers in the two sectors? Evidently their actions were largely independent of each other. Even when they participated in national actions during this period, this was in a serial form not a combined

one. Thus, their actions might have paralleled or even coincided temporally with those of workers outside the particular sector, or even outside the industry, but they were confined to the workplace and required no combination for success. The significant difference between portworker and dockworker action would seem to have been the generality of the dockworker one. Thus, even if the portworkers were gradually breaking down previous fraction, segment or stratum divisions, they did not during this period reach the kind of combination that was almost natural to dockworkers. That dockwide strikes were natural to dockworkers, however, is not to suggest a more advanced consciousness or capacity. Determinants of dockworker action included the divided nature of industrial ownership, the undifferentiated nature of dock labour, the lack of a liberal-paternalist labour control strategy, and the underdevelopment of dockworker organisation. The four were of course, inter-related and mutually-determining. The very success of dockwide strikes was leading to recognition of the radical union, the application of liberal-paternalist norms, the reform of the ownership pattern - and discouragement to dockwide strikes! In this sense the discovery (or rediscovery) of more-general strike action by the portworkers suggests a higher level of consciousness than the dockworkers. Or a more significant rupture with official values and the Nigerian state. Despite their relatively advantageous material position, despite non-capitalist employment, despite sophisticated labour-control strategy, and despite organisational division, the workers were prepared to take action. Deeply incorporated into wage labour, well-aware of national labour-control strategy, these workers were not only prepared to stop work but also to tamper with equipment or to condone such tampering.

## 16.2. Strike leadership and strategy

Now for the issue of strike leadership and tactics. Within the NPA we are reduced to talking about the leadership provided by the R&PT&CSU. On the one occasion that the NMTUF felt obliged to take action, this was of a very brief and very mild nature, and its success was dependent on the more militant previous actions of others. With regard to the R&PT&CSU we must consider to what extent its leadership had its own motives for strike action separate (or separable) from those of the workers. One notices that most of the issues the union raised during this period were grades and trades ones, that they were frequently of great complexity, and that they often turned on fine legal or debating points. All these features are ones that reduce the level of worker activity or narrow it down to particular affected categories. The complexity of the issues requires that they be left in the hands of leaders with particular skills, and that they be solved

in negotiation. That the one-eighth issue became generalisable to the mass of NPA workers was not due to the original nature of the demand, nor was it put forward on behalf of NPA workers as a whole. Furthermore, strikes were used as an instrument of struggle against other unions, and not always in a manner that would increase worker unity. The Udoji strike seems to have been at least in part motivated by a desire to do down a union that had done nothing more than correct an anomaly affecting some of its members. Finally, there can be little doubt that Adebola's militancy in the 1970s was in large part motivated by his bitter conflict with certain NPA managers. In so far as all this is true, it makes the strikes appear as an instrument in the hands of leaders who could turn them off (as they did for half a year or so) or on, at their own will and for their own purposes.

The R&PT&CSU leadership was as prone to use other means of struggle which did not imply mass action at all. Thus, it had through the 1970s continually made use of secret letters and files to which it had been able to get access. Such documents were used in press releases, and in appeals to various state bodies for action against the NPA managers. These exposures were also extremely effective, finally resulting in the retirement at government order of a considerable number of top managers, as well as an officier of the NPA Board. The tactic was, no doubt, applauded by workers, seeing their erstwhile lords and masters tumbled by the audacious Adebola. Yet, the tactic was not one that required any collective worker action. The workers - with the exception of the one or two who might have been involved in obtaining or copying the confidential documents - were just an admiring audience. Furthermore, the tactic was just a tactic: exposure or threat of exposure was used against a particular manager, or management as a whole, to obtain some possibly unrelated concession by the union. Thus, when the R&PT&CSU obtained incontrovertible evidence that a particular manager was running a private transportation company from his NPA quarters, the evidence was handed to the press. But, at a certain point, the campaign was simply abandoned.

The opportunity for the union to make a point about the nature of management as such was not taken because the union still believed there could be a good management. We do not know whether it was this sort of behaviour to which the moderate critics of the R&PT&CSU were referring when they called it 'political', but it was - perhaps - a style of operation more appropriate to the Nigerian parties of the past than to that collective worker self-activity necessary if unions were to be able to deal with the more-experienced and tougher management and state that could be expected in the future in Nigeria.

All this should not, however, lead us to lose sight of the fact that the R&PT&CSU recognised the desire of workers for militant action, and that the workers approved of its general strategy and responded enthusiastically to it.

When considering strike leadership and tactics amongst the dockworkers we are able to compare that at company level with that at dockwide level. The ambiguity of the BSA's role during the 1975 Biney strike nicely reflects not only its position as an organisation of supervisory staff but also its continuing dependency on Chief Biney. Evidently, such an organisation had little potential as a strike leadership. The history of the moderates with respect to strikes suggests little more than this. The semi-conspiratorial manner in which they went about organising the 1976 strike suggests little talent for mass leadership. The success of the event, however, shows that dockworker strikes could be used for leadership purposes quite distinct from those of workers - a fact of general relevance. The informal committees that organised the 1968 general strike and the 1969 Biney strikes were evidently adequate to the immediate task, but inadequate for that of continuous struggle. Continuous struggle still seems to have required external support in the form of expertise, advice, finance or organisation. The socialist intellectuals failed to provide this in 1968, just as they have failed to provide it for the trade union movement more generally since that date. The mantle of strike leadership thus fell for most of this period on the shoulders of the radicals. These had access to the expertise, advice, etc., through their link with the radical NTUC. It was probably this access that enabled the radicals to preserve a united leadership and to act as a permanent strike leadership during these years. Yet this was not sufficient to transform them from a permanent action committee (one step ahead of the informal committees) into an organisation. It was only through organising strikes that they were linked to the workers. When they abandoned this activity, they lost control of them. Their abandonment of the strike was motivated by the interests of the leaders. Or, to put it another way, they were abandoning it for reasons that were obscure to the workers.

One notes a number of special features of dockworker strikes during this period. The first and most important is that the dockers became capable of organising successful general strikes without the support of the national trade union movement. It is true that most of the successful wage claims conformed to the traditional form of private-sector action, in following up national-level demands or government concessions. However, a series of defensive actions (against reductions) or demonstrative ones (for decasualisation,

recognition) were carried out independently and with a certain success. One notes, secondly, the continued occurrence of violence. This was of two kinds, one used against the contractors, NPA or police, the other against dockers, NPA workers or opposition leaders. The 'thugs', 'smugglers' and 'canoeboys' of 1968 appeared to have still been there nine years later. Given the nature of the industry, it is difficult to say whether the men who played this role were ordinary dockers or toughs hired from the periphery of the industry. Notable in the 1976 strike was that the violence was apparently being directed indiscriminately against both of the above-mentioned categories. The fact that each side accused the other of using violent intimidation is an indicator that it was considered illegitimate. It may be significant that in 1975 the radicals took steps to avoid such violence during strikes, and claimed later to have decided to end the use of it against the moderate leaders. The third feature one notes is that the radicals had not liberated themselves from dependency on the state. The organisation of strikes seems to have been for them more a means of gaining recognition than of raising worker consciousness and capacity. They were prepared not only to abandon strikes as part of an unwritten deal with the state, but to collaborate with the very state agency that was used to arrest and beat dockers during strikes - the police.

What does this tell us about strike leadership within the industry? It suggests, first the necessity of continuing leadership, secondly that the existence of this implies the possible use of strikes in the interest of such leaderships. Although this might seem self-evident, it is often forgotten. Given the opportunity that permanent leadership provides either to raise the consciousness and capacity of workers or to channel their energy off for non-working-class purposes, the crucial question is evidently what kind of leadership is being offered. The differences between the two major types of strike leadership being offered within the industry seem here less significant than their similarities. Or perhaps it is the analogous relationship with the workers that is notable. Both leaderships evidently responded to the implicit or explicit worker demand for action. Both effectively stimulated and organised it. Yet both were capable of turning the action off (or at least trying to do so) for reasons that were more theirs than those of their followers. For both leaderships the strike appeared to be in good part a weapon in a battle being fought by themselves in the negotiating chambers of capital and state.

## 16.3. Strikes, division and unity

Now for the issue of relative worker militancy in the two sectors and its implications for the unity/

division issue more generally.

In Chapter 13 it was made clear that worker militancy or extremity in strikes was insufficient to indicate the capacity to control either the workers' own organisations or the society as a whole. After what has been said concerning the relative militancy of port and dockworkers it should not be necessary to further labour this point here. Militancy is not enough. There must be an expansion in the interests served - and in the understanding of self-interest of those interests. In other words, there must be an expansion of action to include yet more fractions, segments and strata of the working class, and/or new and broader demands. In both our cases, the issues round which strikes took place were traditional ones, and the groups on whose behalf they were put forward were quite narrowly defined. The price of such limitations became evident in the dockworker case and remained as a likely outcome in the portworker one.

At the same time, we do see that 'redefinition through struggle' spoken of in Chapter 13. The strikes were imposed on leaderships that had previously been moderate (Abebola) or positively opposed to striking (the BSA and the dockworker moderates). The disjuncture, secondly, of these strikes from national union and political organisation, must not be seen as necessarily limiting. It meant, in the first case, independence from the articulating role of distant national - and even more distant international - union leaders over whom the workers had little practical control. It meant, in the second case, freedom from the state-oriented politics of reformist or 'revolutionary' intellectuals, imposing on workers ideologies and programmes with little or no relationship to worker needs or capacities. The port and dockworkers seem to have been redefining themselves collectively in a tougher-minded (if narrow) fashion, in order to extend control over their immediate conditions of work.

If we now compare these strikes with what we have observed of strikes at the capitalist periphery more generally, we do find distinct parallels with the conclusions of Jelin on Argentina and Shaheed on Pakistan - despite the very differences noted between peripheral formations by Hyman. There seems to be developing, in other words, a general tendency for worker protest action to free itself from statist politics, and from control by top national union leaders. Where the Nigerian strikes differed (also beyond Lagos Port) was in their failure to escalate or broaden, as they did in the Argentinian, Pakistani and Namibian cases. We noted in Chapter 13 the possibility that strikes open for the overcoming of two crucial cleavages imposed by capital and state - that between the industrial and political levels of working-class

struggle, and that between different sectors of the labouring poor. Here we see the negative aspect of the tough but narrow vision and action of the workers in the cargo-handling industry. A failure to engage directly with the central organs of the state implies a failure to recognise the role of the state in reproducing the industrial exploitation and oppression. A failure to raise worker demands of immediate interest to other labouring people (transport, housing, inflation, police and military harassment, etc.) means a self-definition in status rather than class terms. By this I mean that these workers were defining themselves as 'wage-earners' in the capitalist sense, rather than as a 'working class' the interests of which inevitably surpass the bounds of the wage relationship.

If, in their failure to escalate and spread, these strikes differed from the movements noted elsewhere in peripheral capitalist societies then this may be due not only to the specificity of Nigeria as a peripheral capitalist society but also to the inevitable focus of most strike studies on the most dramatic movements. In dealing with a period that was critical neither for Nigerian capital nor for the state, we may find more parallels with strikes in the core capitalist formations than in the peripheral-capitalist ones. It is under such 'normal' conditions that collective-bargaining unionism best develops, that the separation between worker activation and representation develops and that the already-mentioned problem of the re-institutionalisation of conflict arises most clearly. The non-revolutionary character of strikes in Lagos Port at this time might be a disappointment to marxist intellectuals, socialist politicians and radical union leaders. No matter. These 'normal' strikes will be recognisable to workers in 'normal' capitalist countries. Perhaps such a recognition will break through the barriers of ignorance, race, nationality, affiliation and ideology that have so far prevented meaningful contacts between Nigerian and other workers.

## 16.4. Conclusion

As for this case, we can conclude as follows. Whatever the motive and intentions of the leaders, and regardless of their incapacity to raise the consciousness and action of their followers beyond the horizons of their own half industry, the strikes nonetheless played a crucial role in liberating the workers from the feelings of inferiority and subordination inculcated by the wage-labour relationship. They also provided a crucial reminder to state and capital that they were not simply a labour force to be summarily exploited and oppressed, and to their leaders that they were not simply followers to be led. They were wage labourers, in one Lagos industry, awkwardly, slowly, yet certainly, contributing through their self-deter-

mined action to the creation of a Nigerian working class. And if this action was being carried out without common consciousness, organisation and action, then we should remember this:[1] in historical reality members of the working class are always at different stages of becoming. In our case we have been concerned with two fractions, one more and one less incorporated into wage labour. If the first stood close to and were influenced by the intermediate salaried strata, so did the second to the petty-bourgeoisie. If the first have to struggle to distinguish themselves from such strata, so do the second from the petty-bourgeoisie and the peasantry. In the process of this struggle, the two will not only find each other but also provide a pole of attraction for other labouring people. But they will only provide such a pole if they simultaneously help the other labouring men - and women - to escape from functions, roles and self-definitions imposed on them by an anarchistic, degrading and increasingly violent and destructive capitalist world order. In reaching out to new frineds nationally and internationally, the workers of Lagos Port - and of Nigeria - will better identify and isolate the few enemies who personify exploitative capital and the oppressive state.

NOTES

1. I owe the following thought to a similar formulation by Archie Mafeje (1977).

# CONCLUSION

## 1. The end of a debate?

This work began with the ambition of surpassing the labour aristocracy/semi-proletarianised peasants dichotomy. It ends with the hope that it might represent the end also of this particular debate, and that future studies of the working class and unions in Africa (and elsewhere) will be carried out without this particular crutch or aunt sally. The hope would be futile if it depended solely on my efforts, since there is no power in theory alone that can prevent socialist intellectuals - or socialist politicians and labour leaders for that matter - from retaining traditional formulas or modes of thought. These may, indeed, serve their particular purposes, long after the appearances that gave rise to them have disappeared. Hopes for a reconceptualisation of the problem must therefore rather depend on the changing nature of labour struggles in Nigeria and Africa and elsewhere. These struggles - themselves a response to the changing nature of capital accumulation and state formation - are refusing to be bound by strategies based on the traditional modes of thought. It is this process that has called for a more adequate conceptualisation and analysis. It has - as we will see - also raised new problems for analysis. The question then is one of whether the old problem has been adequately re-conceptualised, and whether the new ones are being looked at in a new way or simply by a shifting of the traditional modes of thought into the new area. It would be regretable if this occurred. Part of the purpose of this conclusion is both to identify the shift in terrain of debate concerning relations amongst different kinds of working people in Africa (and the capitalist periphery more generally). Another part is to suggest the relevance to analysis of this new area of the re-conceptualisation developed with respect to the old one. The end of the old debate signals the beginning of a new one.

The purpose and spirit of this Conclusion should be made clear. The body of the study has been carried out in positive terms, in the sense of explaining and using new concepts to analyse the old problem (although

occasional criticism of the old concepts and methods may have been made along the way). The case study could, therefore, stand on its own, requiring here merely a summary and the indication of certain theoretical or political implications. If I have chosen to take issue with others in Section 5 below, it is for the purpose already indicated and in the spirit suggested by Arrighi and Saul in the Introduction: to contribute to constructive debate amongst concerned radicals, to develop and demonstrate new concepts, and particularly to address oneself to the problem of solidarity amongst labouring people differentially incorporated into the circuits of capital and the meshes of state.[1]

Let us now recall what was said of the labour aristocracy thesis in the Introduction and follow this up by considering the alternative offered. The labour aristocracy thesis, it was argued, was empirically falsifiable: its economic, social and political assertions were inadequate, or misleading, or simply wrong. The problem underlying this was one of misconceptualisation: the concept and its binary opposite had ambiguous and shifting referents, they were internally contradictory, represented a logical rather than a sociological opposition, and were of no analytical value. The misconceptualisation suggested methodological errors: 1) the freezing of the social process, 2) the presentation of the working class and proletarianisation in terms of binary opposition, 3) the presentation of consciousness in economic-determinist or class-reductionist terms, 4) the failure to directly observe and analyse the behaviour being conceptualised. Such points were partially conceded by John Saul. It was argued, finally, that the thesis had political implications that were in contradiction with a socialist orientation: there was an elitist notion of leadership (salaried middle strata who were assumed to be more radical than the workers and better understand their interests) and a statist notion of transformation and socialism (which might have to be imposed by governments on the resistant labour aristocrats).

Connections were suggested between shortcomings in the African labour aristocracy thesis on the one hand, and marxist dependency theory, classical marxist labour aristocracy theory, and marxism more generally on the other hand. Despite such shortcomings, the labour aristocracy thesis was still considered worthy of examination. Firstly, because it was an attempt to come to terms with the fundamental problem of 'uneven proletarian consciousness and industrial sectionalism'. Secondly, because it addressed itself directly to the trade unions and the role within them of the differentially proletarianised. Thirdly, because it raised questions concerning the role of the non-industrial workers who form the overwhelming majority of the

African working class. Finally, because criticism of the labour aristocracy thesis had tended to negate it rather than surpass it.

In what follows, we will consider in turn the case itself, the re-conceptualisation, the underlying approach and its general implications, and the relationship between all this and some relevant recent literature on labour in Africa and more generally.

## 2. A case reconsidered

Part I shows how capital and state attempt to shape labour within Lagos Port. The first chapter considers the historical development and present structure of industry, labour relations and the working class in Nigeria generally. There are identified three periods of industrialisation, and four distinct wage-labour sectors currently existing. The specific history and structure of wage labour is set out. We are considering workers in a country in which one in three works outside agriculture, in which the workers are outnumbered three to one by non-wage-earners in the cities, and where only one worker in three works for even small-scale capitalists. There are also identified two main periods in national industrial relations policy in Nigeria, that of a liberal paternalist model and of an increasing - if uncertain - corporatism. The development of the national trade union movement is shown to be in part determined by the requirements of such policies and in part by the development of the Nigerian working class. This class - divided by industrial structure and region - is shown to be intimately related to the rural and urban petty-bourgeoisie, from which it springs and amongst which it lives. Despite the development of a specific working-class consciousness and behaviour, and despite the capacity for effective local-level working-class protest, we see why it had been unable, till at least 1977, to create a class-conscious and representative national leadership. The second chapter deals with the structure of the Lagos cargo-handling industry itself, particularly with the division into two major sectors, and the division within each of these. Here we see that workers are divided not only by ownership sectors, but also scale (one big NPA, many small contractors), and within each sector by a multiplicity of factors intended to make them functional to the separate structures. It is also shown that the sectoral division is a historically-determined and still changing one, with changes largely reflecting the interests of capital and state - or fractions of these. The third chapter is concerned with the social backgrounds, present networks and living conditions of the two central categories within each sector. It becomes evident that we are looking at two worlds of wage labour, with major differences in income and security, background and education, social

networks and life chances. Evidence of the portworker-dockworker gap is found in abundance, yet we can also see gaps within each category, and considerable linkages between the way of life of manual portworkers and the experienced dockworkers. In the conclusion to this part (Chapter 4), it is argued that whilst proletarianisation brings about a certain homogeneity within the wage-labour force, it simultaneously brings about a repeated heterogenisation. The heterogeneity in the port implies a multiplicity of divisions between the workers being considered. The division between rich and poor workers is, thus, only one of the variety of divisions and separations that Nigerian capital and state implies for Nigerian labour. The division of the cargo-handling industry into two major ownership, scale, technology and labour-control sectors certainly exists. Yet there is in neither of them the classical division between factory proletarians and industrial capitalists. Moreover, each of the two labour forces is itself significantly divided by fraction, segment and stratum. Given, further, the close relationship between contract and permanent workers - close compared with the whole range of urban labourer types in peripheral capitalist cities - the question of whether this particular division is the most significant one is by no means self-evident.

Part II begins the study of unions as the common form of worker organisation in the port. It is concerned primarily with the external relations of the unions - union strategy toward capital and state. Having already recognised the nature of the division between the two types of labour force, this part concerns the implications of such a division for the more- and less-proletarianised workers respectively. Within the NPA we see the variety of membership constituencies, and unions largely focused on competitive grades and trades demands within the framework of collective bargaining institutions and ideology. Increasing factionalism is, however, seen not simply as expressing ever-narrower self-interest but also increasing dissatisfaction with the existing union strategy. This both permits and encourages the development of a more-aggressive and more-encompassing union strategy, which provides a basis for re-unification amongst the workers. The limits of this change are shown in the fact that it is industrial relations institutions rather than industrial relations ideology that are questioned, the strategy rather than the demands that change. The variety of situations and levels within the contractor sector implies a greater variety of possible constituencies and strategies. Yet here, too, we see a definite movement in the direction of radicalism. Even the most employer-dependent of the unions shows its teeth. The moderate-reformist organisation is continually outflanked. But the militant unrecognised organisation is unable to provide organisational ex-

pression to the radicalism it has itself awakened. However ambiguous, portworker radicalism is able to take some definite organisational form. Dockworker radicalism has difficulty in achieving this. Interpretation of such findings can be found in Chapter 6. The two final paragraphs of that chapter contain the most important conclusions. One concerns the nature of the working class, the other the nature of trade unionism as a type of worker organisation. The first conclusion is that there is no 'real' working class in Nigeria from which either the more- or less-proletarianised workers are deviating, no proletarian vanguard (no economically-determined natural vanguard) that other workers can be expected to follow. One cannot assume, on the basis of extent-of-proletarianisation or extent-of-deprivation, a certain class consciousness. Insofar, indeed, as a certain type of consciousness is premised on the particular group experience, the radicalism of that group is going to be limited by this particularity. The second conclusion follows from this one in asking whether the trade unions do not reinforce such worker particularism. Whilst it is argued that the unions had in the Lagos Port case been overcoming such divisions, it is recognised that the union form of organisation does permit such particularism. The more general question is left open for later consideration.

Part III provides material for further consideration of this second issue. It is concerned with the internal relations of the trade union movement locally, nationally and internationally. It considers in turn the nature of union structures, leadership relations with the national and international movement, and leadership relations with the membership. The analysis (Chapter 12) summarises the findings on these, albeit in another order. First comes the worker-leader relationship. Here is pointed out not only the separate orientations (of the NPA workers toward the intermediate salaried strata, and of the dockworkers toward the petty-bourgeoisie) but also their common consciousness of wage-worker status. This shared consciousness does not include a national or international working class (nor each other) but it parallels that of other workers. It also parallels attitudes of other non-waged labouring people in Nigeria, and it can therefore be seen to allow for common action with them. Amongst the leaders we can identify a process of professionalisation and danger of bureaucratisation. It is also suggested that insofar as the leaders fail to raise the consciousness and activity of members they can themselves be considered as occupying intermediate positions in the class structure rather than leadership positions within the working class. With respect to union structure, there is identified a common process toward a collective-bargaining unionism, but without any necessary corollary concerning bureaucratisation.

It is, however, suggested that insofar as collective bargaining status is achieved and accepted as both means and ends of union activity, unions become conservative, and factionalism and clientalism will be stimulated. This line of argument is continued in considering relations between the Lagos Port unions and their national and international union contacts. It is the conservative nature of such higher organisations, based on old compromises with capital and state, that leads them to stimulate clientalism and factionalism within the unions at port level. The conclusion to this chapter turns again to the general question of the union form and worker division. It is argued that we must recognise that capital and state (competition and hierarchy) operate inside as well as outside or above the trade union movement. Insofar as union leaders do not recognise and take action against it, obstacles to the expansion and consolidation of a working class will remain. There is no evidence that even the two radical leaderships recognised this in word or action. Perceived as specialised structures with an alloted role in an existing social formation, unions will reproduce old divisions or create new ones amongst workers. Perceived as a movement against capitalism and statism outside, competition and hierarchy inside, unions could possibly contribute to overcoming divisions amongst workers.

But have the workers the capacity to thus impose themselves within their unions and then through their unions? Part IV is concerned with this issue. Since Chapters 14 and 15 do little more than present a chronological account of strike activity in each sector, we may move directly to Chapter 16. This deals in turn with worker consciousness and capacity, with strike leadership, and with the problem of worker unity. First, consciousness and capacity. Although the portworkers are overcoming their divisions during this period, and becoming more militant, their strikes are comparatively few in number, moderate and far from general. The greater generality, frequency and militancy of dockworker strikes, however, does not necessarily evidence a more advanced worker consciousness and capacity. In both cases the strike form can be seen as a rational and effective response to the situation of the particular fraction. But whilst the dockworker protest is leading them into the status enjoyed by the portworkers, portworker protest is implicitly leading them beyond this. However, each fraction was customarily striking on its own, and common action during national actions did not usually mean joint action. Secondly, strike leadership. This comes in both cases to be in the hands of radical union leaderships. But it is clear in both cases that these leaderships have motives for striking that are separate - or separable - from those of their followers. The quite considerable differences between the two leader-

ships seem here less significant than their similarities. Both leaderships respond to worker demands for action, both stimulate and lead it, yet both are capable of turning actions off for their own reasons. But this must not be taken to mean that the strikes are totally in the hands of the leaders. Thirdly, the question of worker unity. It is clear that we here see a growing militancy, but one expressed in terms of a fairly narrowly-defined self-interest. However, this need not be considered a simply negative phenomenon. The strikes do not in any way oppose our two major worker categories to each other. Nor do they conflict with the interests of other Nigerian workers. The port and dockworkers are redefining themselves, collectively but separately, in a narrower but tougher-minded manner. The problem that remains is one of expanding the self-definition and taking more effective action. Protest action must include more fractions, segments and strata of the working class, and involve new and broader demands. But even these 'normal' strikes, taking place under non-crisis conditions nonetheless demonstrate the capacity of the workers to impose themselves on capital and state and their own union leaderships.

The case, in conclusion, does not appear to confirm the listed assumptions and assertions of the labour aristocracy theory. It reveals the very real differences and separation between our two worker types but no conflict between them. It reveals other differences and separations within each sector that would seem to be as significant in obstructing the development of class consciousness as those between the 'labour aristocrats' and the 'semi-proletarianised peasants'. It produces a detailed specification of the nature of each worker type where previously there had been only economic-determinist prediction. It suggests the capacity of workers to fight capitalists and bureaucrats.

## 3. A conceptualisation re-examined

The problem for social analysis - at least for socialist analysts - is also one of overcoming concepts that reflect rather than penetrate, obscure rather than reveal, and that express the capitalist project rather than attempting to suggest a socialist one. To expand on the last point: the division of rich workers and poor workers, of the protected and unprotected, those in large-scale from those in small-scale industries - these represent a capitalist project; this project is reflected/expressed/obscured in labour aristocracy theory. And if an overcoming of such concepts is a problem for socialist analysts, it is also a problem for the labour movement on which such concepts do have some influence. What kind of conceptualisation has been offered as an alternative?

In Section 4 of the Introduction I said that I was going to draw largely from the writings of contemporary European and American marxists who had attempted to come to terms with divisions within classes, within the labour movement, and with the specificity of peripheral capitalist societies. I also said that I would be drawing my conceptualisation from differing marxist traditions. How did this work out in practice?

We may first note what a quantity and variety of concepts and conceptualisations were called on to deal (briefly) with what capital and state do to labour and what workers - through organisation and struggle - try to do to capital and state. And this range of theory was felt necessary to deal almost solely with the union form of worker organisation and the strike form of worker protest action. 'Uneven proletarian consciousness and industrial sectionalism' is thus shown to be a most complex matter, requiring a whole set of instruments for its dissection, rather than a simple matter that can be handled with a single carving knife.

In Part I the key pieces of conceptualisation had to do with labour-control strategy at national level, and its implications for division amongst workers (in terms of fraction, segment and stratum). In Part II we introduced concepts to deal with the historical development of international unionism, with the socio-political and economic contexts of union activity, with levels of worker protest, organisational types and leadership strategy. In Part III we considered class structure and consciousness, non-class structures and consciousness, union structure and function, intra-union division, leadership style and position. In Part IV we took a more comparative approach, but nonetheless considered both how workers through strike action created new collective identities and how leaderships could mediate and politicise such strikes in their own interests. These pieces of theory were, as has been said, drawn from differing marxist (and, for that matter, non-marxist) traditions, and were occasionally presented in a qualified or problematic manner. Thus, a warning was given concerning the use of typologies (Footnote 7, Chapter 5), which could be formalistic, obfuscating and conservative if they did not have an explicit norm, consistent underlying methodology and an emancipatory purpose. But even where such a typology was found useful, as with those referring to working-class consciousness, or levels of protest, types of organisation and of leadership, warnings were given concerning the usually quite explicit norms. On reflection, it seems to me that the common element in such qualifying statements is that the conceptualisation was based on a partial or outdated reality, and was not allowing for new possibilities in contemporary mass struggles.

The variety of the conceptualisation is, however, not to be explained only by the subject matter itself, but also by the analytical strategy. We were, in a sense, looking at the same problem in four different ways. In Part I we were considering labour in Lagos Port 'from the capitalist point of view', meaning in terms of the continued reproduction of capitalist/statist power. In Part IV we were considering labour 'from the working-class point of view', meaning in terms of worker struggle to resist exploitation and manipulation, to deepen and widen a collective self-identity. In Parts II and III we were looking - respectively - at the unions' relationship to capital and state, and to the working class.

Thus it is, for example, that what is in Part I presented as labour control strategy comes back in Part II as the socio-political and socio-economic contexts of union activity. Or that intra-working-class divisions are presented as an internal relationship in Part I (fraction, segment, stratum) and as an external relationship in Part III (in terms of a - historically developing - relationship with the intermediate social categories). Or that organisations and leaderships are presented twice, first in terms of their external relations to capital and state, then in terms of relations internal to the trade union movement. Or that what is represented in terms of scales and breadths of organisational action in Part II is dealt with in terms of working-class self-identification in Part IV.

I hope that whilst the conceptualisation and analytical strategy might have added to the complexity it will not have led to confusion. The point was made in Section 1 of Chapter 9 that to look at the same subject matter in terms of its external and internal qualities was not contradictory but complementary. The same argument could be made for the overall analytical strategy - that it is necessary if one is to understand class and class struggle not as 'things' in a structure but as relations in a process. But here we are straying from conceptualisation to methodology. And, since I did explicitly criticise the methodology underlying the labour aristocracy thesis, I must now try to just as explicitly identify the methodological implications of my own exercise.

## 4. A movement in approach - and its implications

Of the methodological errors earlier identified, the most important are, perhaps the imposition of binary dichotomies instead of a dialectical approach to the working class as both structure and process, the presentation of consciousness in economic-determinist or class-reductionist terms, and the failure to develop concepts on the basis of direct observation of worker behaviour. Some of this was recognised by critics of

the labour aristocracy thesis. And many of these critics demonstrated a healthy respect for sociological research, as well as for the concrete struggles of the workers and unions they were studying. But it seems to me that in the absence of an alternative methodology it is not possible to surpass the problematic and to reconceptualise it in a manner better serving the struggles of working people. This is difficult because the errors I have identified are - in crude or sophisticated form - part of the marxist heritage. And this heritage is shared even by the non-marxist critics of labour aristocracy theory. It is also my personal heritage, and this work represents my own attempt to come to terms with it. Whilst my criticism will be aimed at a certain kind of marxism, and will attempt to suggest another kind, I hope that it has a broader relevance. This is because, as I have just pointed out, the errors are not simply marxist ones. Not only has much marxism been absorbed by mainstream western social science, but orthodox marxism has also absorbed many liberal assumptions. This has increasingly been pointed out with respect to marxist and liberal 'developmentalism' in studies of third world labour (Gould 1979; Bennholdt-Thomsen 1980). And it has also been suggested with respect to what has been considered the most characteristic element of marxism, its conceptualisation of class:

> The categories of class analysis used by the sociology of the traditional working-class movement and by bourgeois sociology (petty-bourgeoisie, middle class, lumpen- or sub-proletariat, lumpen-bourgeoisie, etc.) are [to be used] only in their <u>conventional historical</u> usage. We consider the scientific value of these classifications - in present conditions and given the assumptions underlying them - to be doubtful to say the least ...These contradictions of language are an expression of the contemporary crisis of the traditional Marxist conceptual apparatus. They underline the need for a creative and political re-evaluation of analytical categories, a 'rediscovery' of Marxism in the light of the contemporary class struggle. (Bologna 1979:67. Original stress).

The key terms here are 'present conditions' and 'assumptions underlying'. Let us, then, see how the working class and the socialist movement was seen, and how I said it should be studied, at the beginning of the work. Let us consider how these initial assumptions were qualified along the way. And let us see what conclusions can be drawn from this movement.

Already in the Introduction (Section 4) I was qualifying an orthodox marxism that prioritises econo-

mic production over social reproduction, exploitation over repression, struggle against capital over struggle against the state. I also reasserted the traditional assumption concerning the fundamentally revolutionary role of the working class, thus prioritising working-class over other struggle. This assertion was then qualified to allow for the shortcomings of wages-and-conditions struggle: there had to be socialists working amonst the generally non-socialist workers; an organised marxist political force was necessary to provide the necessary ideology; social protest movements (women, students, etc.) were necessary to undermine capitalist legitimacy amongst workers; an anti-capitalist reform strategy had to be developed; and the goal had to be understood as a worker self-managed economy and polity. In addition to statements about the nature of capitalist exploitation and oppression, the nature of the working class, and the requirements for a socialist movement, I also took a position on how labour must be studied: in terms of totality, change, contradiction and practice.

There are different strands in these initial positions, but they were sufficient to enable me to begin considering the extent to which the protest and organisation of Lagos workers was more than the expression of separate and opposed interests. In devising or finding finer instruments for particular pieces of analysis in the various theory chapters, however - or in the analyses themselves - I began to further separate some of these strands. Let me try to identify some of the elements I rejected and those which I - at least by suggestion - favoured. Economic determinism was challenged in two senses. In the first sense there was questioned the tendency to reduce capitalism to capital - the economy - seeing the state as secondary or derivative. It was suggested instead that one had to see the problem as capital and state jointly (Chapter 4). The second sense in which economic determinism was questioned was in relation to the class structure. Here my position was more ambiguous since I sometimes allowed for economic determination of class, as in Figure 9.1 and the related discussion. But whilst permitting such 'conventional historical usage', the work as a whole has been concerned to argue that if capital produces the proletariat, it is struggle against it - i.e. a political act - that produces the working class (Chapter 9).

The criticism of proletarianism relates to this. By proletarianism I mean the chain of assumptions: capitalism = proletarianisation = working class = revolutionary subject. In the first place some doubt was placed on the proletarianisation assumption - at least for this case - by showing how little Nigerian capitalism had proletarianised labour, and how ambiguously our labourers were proletarianised. I also

argued that greater proletarianisation did not necessarily imply higher class consciousness (Chapter 8). I further suggested that working-class self-creation was not simply a matter of consolidation amongst wage-earners but expansion to the intermediate salaried and petty-entrepreneurial strata (Chapter 9). Whilst this would extend the concept 'working class' beyond its orthodox limits, there is still a suggestion here that it is the proletarianisation of these strata that allows them to join the working class. I think I should have gone further to argue that the creation of a working class was a joint struggle of all labouring people, in struggle against commercialisation, bureaucratisation and oppression, as well as against proletarianisation. As for the connection working class = revolutionary subject, the case did not allow for its consideration. At least not positively. But the negative implication of such an assumption is, of course, that non-revolutionary workers are not workers but labour aristocrats, semi-proletarianised peasants or lumpen proletarians. And the whole work was concerned with surpassing such conceptual get-outs. More positively, it was also concerned to establish that non-insurrectionary worker struggles can also be anti-capitalist.

This leads us to the criticism of vanguardism, because the traditional instrument for converting the 'economistic' working class into a 'revolutionary' one, has been the vanguard party of socialist revolutionaries. It also leads to the criticism of intellectualism - the notion that socialist intellectuals possess science, whilst the masses have only ideologies. The connection between these positions is that both represent short-cuts to social transformation that actually reproduce the contradictions it is necessary to overcome. In the first case it is the elite/mass or leaders/led contradiction, in the second the mental/manual one. Criticism of the vanguard party was made briefly in Chapter 5 (Footnote 6), where post-revolutionary problems were traced back to the pre-revolutionary party. And in Chapter 12 it was pointed out that the ideologies of 'working-class parties' (reformist as well as marxist) had to be abandoned in favour of some kind of populism that better expressed working-class feelings and capacities. In Chapter 9 I warned against legislating for working-class consciousness from outside and above, and before the event. I also stressed that the advance of class consciousness required the breaking down of the mental/manual division, and the understanding of working-class consciousness in terms of capacity-to-control.

Recognition of the centrality of everyday worker struggles and their increasing capacity to control provides a motivation for criticising a statist understanding of politics. In a number of places 'politics'

appeared within such distancing quotes. And in Chapter 13 it was made clear that the movement of strikes from an industrial to a 'political' terrain could simultaneously imply their transformation from an instrument of the working class to that of other classes. the conceptual problem here is evidently the orthodox coupling of 'politics' with struggle for state power, and the presentation of this as representing the most advanced form of working-class struggle and consciousness. In my conceptual schemas (particularly Chapter 5) I attempted to qualify such an assumption by suggesting 'social' struggle against capital and state as a more-advanced form. But this permitted the connection politics-state to remain, and could allow readers to consider 'industrial' struggle as non-political. Such was evidently not my intention. I hope this is clear from my handling of industrial-level struggles, as well as of struggle against competition and hierarchy within the unions.

The 'de-politicising' of everyday worker struggles is due to an opposition of 'economics' and 'politics' that would seem better to reflect a capitalist project for the working class than a socialist one. Underneath this opposition lies the practice of thinking in terms of binary opposites. We know of labour aristocracy/ semi-proletarianised peasantry. Others have appeared and been criticised, as with responsible autonomy/ direct control (Chapter 4), economic/political (Chapter 5, Section 5 and Footnote 4). I am not sure that the offering of a spectrum represents more than a sophistication of such a practice. And the dangers of such typologies have already been mentioned. The customary orthodox marxist defence of such binary oppositions would be in terms of their 'dialectical inter-relation'. But an assertion of interpenetration, mutual determination or logical dependency seems to me also insufficient to offset the heuristic effect of presenting the world - or labour movement options - in this fashion. The true antidote to dichotomic thinking is, of course, dialectical thinking. I argued in the Introduction for the necessity of presenting the world in terms of totality, change, contradiction and practice. And I can only hope that I have succeeded in presenting my subject matter in a relational manner. My analytical strategy, once again, was concerned with showing labour first in its existence for capital (Part I) and then in its existence for itself. Within the latter part of the work, I dealt with this aspect in two terms, those of union organisation (Parts II and III) and worker protest action (Part IV). And union organisation was, of course, itself dealt with in terms of external and internal relations.

Placed in the light of the above, we can see that labour aristocracy theory is not so much a distortion or vulgarisation of orthodox marxism as an expression

of it, or of a predominant tradition within it. And let us then remember that labour aristocracy theory - such as it is - has authentically marxist roots in Marx, Engels and Lenin. Operating largely with the chain of assumptions listed earlier (proletarianisation = working class = revolutionary subject), and assuming that only insurrectionary struggle was really anti-capitalist, they were obliged to grasp at conceptual straws to explain the non-insurrectionary behaviour of the later-19th century British or early-20th century European working classes. So, in questioning labour aristocracy theory in Africa I have found myself to be questioning orthodox marxist theory much more generally - something it was certainly not my intention to do in commencing this work. Other scholars have been engaged in this more arduous task and I hope that reference to them will show more clearly the implications of the movement I have been making on a more restricted terrain.

Let us first consider again classical labour aristocracy theory. Various criticisms were made of this in the Introduction to this study: that it, too, had multiple and shifting referents; that insofar as it referred to the most-privileged workers it was undermined by evidence of their radical and even revolutionary behaviour; that it was a conceptual escape from a coming to terms with the nature of the working class. Whilst primarily concerned to criticise contemporary 'misapplication of Lenin's theory' in the industrialised capitalist world, John Evansohn (1977) actually reveals the shortcomings of Lenin's theory. Against the contemporary argument that the workers in the industrialised West are corrupted by the spoils of imperialism, he argues: 1) that the tendency of the rate of profit to fall drives capitalists to invest abroad; 2) that this holds back capital formation in the metropolis and increases the reserve army of labour there; 3) that, in effect, workers in peripheral countries are being thus hired to assist capitalist class struggle against workers in the metropolis; 4) that we can in the contemporary world see how such increased foreign investment and international competition leads to an intensification of exploitation at the core, and to increased resistance by the working class there. The privileged position of metropolitan workers is due not to 'imperialist spoils', says Evansohn, but to uneven capitalist development, to their higher productivity, to a system of prices determined by capitalism, not by the working class. Finally, the theory is a 'false issue' (58), because the fundamental question is not the standard of living, consumption levels of wages but that

> The basic relations of capitalist production, the process of production itself, and the system of class relations continually produce

> and reproduce the conflict between capital and labour, whether in terms of the price of labour power, the utilisation of labour power in the production process, the ends for which labour power is used, or the reproduction of labour power. (60).

Here Evansohn lays stress on the development of capitalist industrialisation implying increasing appropriation from the worker, increasing domination of the worker by his product, increasing competition from man and machine, 'increasing alientation of workers from themselves, from their needs and protentialities, and from other workers' (59).

But much of the latter part of the argument (and some of the earlier as well) is subversive of Lenin's own argument. For Evansohn reveals that the latter was 1) merely conjunctural, explaining the material basis for the chauvinism and opportunism of certain strata or leaders in the face of World War I, and that it was 2) on the basis of such a merely conjunctural theory that Lenin justified a splitting of the international labour movement into the opportunist/chauvinist/philistine trend (representing the corrupted minority), and a revolutionary trend (representing the real masses). Furthermore, he explicitly questions Lenin's theory: for even

> if one could argue that in the short run the capitalist class was forced to distribute a portion of the 'spoils', the question becomes, what are the mechanisms of that distribution? To whom do they distribute it? A fraction of the working class? The whole class? Union officials? (55).

He does not attempt to answer this question, preferring rather to stress Lenin on the long-run implications of the internationalisation of captial: that it would lead to worldwide capitalist competition, equalising conditions of exploitation, eliminating the possibility of labour aristocracies in other countries, and implying the impossibility of any longterm opportunist domination of the working class anywhere in the world. It becomes apparent from this that Lenin's was a spoils theory, and that it was economic-determinist in the crudest sense (rich workers and or rich/corrupted union leaders equal opportunism; 'real masses' and revolutionary leaders equal revolution). It has also been proven wrong. Because, if by 'opportunism' we understand reformism, this has been the dominant ideological/political trend in the organised labour movements of the core capitalist societies ever since Lenin. And also because, where the communists found their 'real masses' and brought about revolutions, the working-class nature of these has been increasingly questioned...by the working class!

The problem underlying Lenin's economic-determinism in this instance (in other instances Lenin revealed, as we will see, another orientation) would seem to be the absence of a theoretical explanation for working-class behaviour in the period between an initial rebellion during early capitalist industrialisation and the predicted revolution against a developed industrial capitalism.[2] Andrew Friedman (1977) traces the problem back to Marx himself. He suggests that 'while class divisions are at the centre of Marx's analysis of the capitalist mode of production, class struggle is not' (5). Friedman suggests that Marx recognised the manner in which workers resisted the imposition of proletarianisation and provided examples of them in Capital. But

> These examples have to be teased out of Capital. In general Marx described the development of capitalist productive activity in terms of successive stages of social relations developing out of the technical progress of the forces of production once the initial basic mode of production is established. (48).

Marx understood that worker resistance would eventually overthrow capitalism, but not the implications of worker struggle along the way. Says Friedman,

> Worker resistance must be seen as a force (thrown up by the basic mode of production) which affects capitalist development, rather than simply a force which may eventually result in the destruction of the capitalist mode of production. (49).

What we can draw out of Friedman's treatment is, once again, the strong economic-determinist element to be found in the classical marxists, an element encouraging explanations of both working-class radicalism and of working-class conservatism in terms of what capitalism does to it (or fractions of it). The alternative required would seem to be an approach that not only puts class struggle at the centre of the analysis, but which sees such struggle in much more complex ways than heretofore. Such an alternative orientation is also present within Marx when he says:

> Communism is for us not a state of affairs which is to be established, an ideal to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the real movement which abolishes the present state of things. (Arthur 1970:56-7. Original stress).

The relevance of such an orientation is revealed by Laclau and Mouffe (1981). Within Marx and marxism,

they say, one can find class struggle both as an effect of underlying forces and as the motor of history itself. The first position implies the primacy of the economic, the second that of the political. They then show how the first came to dominate the Second International and how it continues to dominate marxism - despite major challenges - even today. What are some of the elements of this doctrine? 1) that history has laws independent of human will; 2) that history develops by economic stages, to which politics must adapt; 3) that capitalisation and proletarianisation will come to replace all previously-existing classes and remove all previously-existing structures and contradictions; 4) that this whole process is understood by marxist scientists, who bring it to the masses. I would characterise these positions as those of economic determinism, stageism, class reductionism and elitism. Laclau and Mouffe also reveal curious and complex corollaries of these positions:

> since the endogenous logic of the process of capital accumulation would lead to the proletarianisation of the middle classes and the peasantry...there was no need to articulate the interests of these sectors to those of the workers...In this way, there emerged a characteristic dialectic between the isolation of the working class and its centrality: by relying on itself and defending its own specific interests, it would end up by representing the whole of the exploited masses. (18).

Thus the proletarianisation assumption and proletarianism, whilst appearing to be particularly marxist and revolutionary, actually prevent proletarians from escaping from the isolation imposed on them by capital.

Laclau and Mouffe identify within marxism a movement against economism associated with the names of Lenin, Gramsci and Togliatti. Lenin saw the overthrow of capitalism as occuring not where the forces of production were most developed, but where the contradictions were most acute. And such contradictions were not simply those of worker against capitalist but also of peasant against landlord, nation against empire and people against state and war. Revolution was, thus, an outcome of the articulation of different class struggles, and of class struggles with popular struggles. Whilst Lenin moved toward asserting the primacy of the political, however, he also stressed a hiatus between the working class in-itself and for-itself. He therefore posited a vanguard party to 1) represent the objective interests of the class, and 2) articulate the pre-existing separate interests of working class and peasantry (or, rather, of the working class <u>over</u> the peasantry). The first element leads to the

'working-class party' (substituting itself for the empirically-existing working class) and to the danger of infinite substitutionism. The second element implies the continued existence of economically-determined classes: the leading role of the working class over the peasantry is something guaranteed by capitalism rather than something to be demonstrated by political activity:

> The consequences of these limitations...were to be far-reaching: they would install...a permanent dualism between the political logic of Leninism and the economistic logic of Kautskyism. The primacy of the political was to be reserved for critical conjunctures, whilst economism continued to dominate for periods of stability. (19).

Gramsci draws out and makes explicit the potentiality present in Lenin, seeing leadership (hegemony) not as simply bringing together pre-existing classes and forces, but as political, moral and intellectual leadership through which new common identities (political subjects) are to be created. The revolutionary subject is a force which articulates within itself working-class demands and popular democratic ones which are not reducible to class demands. Gramsci also breaks with the notion of revolution as primarily seizure of state power:

> If the articulations of the social whole are political articulations, there is no level of society where power and forms of resistance are not exercised...The achievement of socialism...does not arise from an absolute moment represented by a radical break consisting of the seizure of power. It must instead be the result of a series of partial ruptures through which the ensemble of relations of forces existing in society will be transformed...What [this] refers to is a novel conception of the radicalisation and politicisation of social struggles, one which enlarges the field of confrontation and struggle to the whole of civil society. (20).

However, Gramsci and his followers have, according to Laclau and Mouffe, left us with two heritages of economism: the necessarily hegemonic role of the working class, and of the working-class party as the articulator of that hegemony. But

> if it is certain that the working class is a decisive force without which there can be no socialism...its vanguard role cannot be considered an ontological privilege, guaran-

> teed a priori by the economic structure...As far as the role of the party goes...There is no question here of claiming that the 'party' form has become obsolete and that 'political' struggle of the traditional kind has been superseded, but rather of accepting that these only compose one terrain of political struggle in the broader sense that we have now defined. (22).

Laclau and Mouffe, concerned with Western Europe, list as new subjects, engaged in 'clearly anti-capitalist struggle', anti-nuclear and anti-state, women's national, racial and sexual rights movements. They point out for these, however, that

> Their enemy is defined not by its function of exploitation, but by wielding a certain power. And this power, too, does not derive from a place in the relations of production, but is the outcome of the form of social organisation characteristic of the present society. This society is indeed capitalist, but this is not its only characteristic; it is sexist and patriarchal as well, not to mention racist. (21).

But whilst they stress the necessity for such movements to have an autonomous role within a socialist project, they by no means reduce the significance of worker or factory struggles. On the contrary, they insist precisely on their political character:

> It is ever more clear today that the development of the productive forces in terms of capitalist rationality leads...to the destruction of natural resources and possibly even of civilisation itself. We must therefore topple the last bastion of economism and assert the primacy of politics within the economy itself. Far from forming a homogenous field ruled by the simple logic of profit maximisation, the economy is in actual fact a complex relation of forces between various social agents, and the productive forces are themselves subject to the rationality imposed on them by the ruling class. This means that the economy, like all other spheres of society, is the terrain of political struggle...(22).

It should now be clear that 1) labour aristocracy theory is but a symptom of a long-established and severely-restricting set of assumptions, and 2) it must be traced back to these roots. The alternative? Summarily: social structure is determined by political struggle; classes are shaped and re-shaped through

struggle; worker struggles are political struggles; the enemy is capital and state (and patriarchy and racism); the end is not the grasping of state power and the nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy, but the overcoming of exploitation and domination throughout society; this project will only be realised by the articulation of the autonomous demands of different types of worker, of the working class and other 'working classes', of class and popular demands.

But, if I have now placed my work within a wider context of research and discourse, it still remains to relate it to the most recent literature on relations amongst labouring people in peripheral capitalist societies.

## 5. A comparison made

The purpose of the last section was to suggest how labour aristocracy theory was but a symptom of an approach that tended to reflect or express what capital and state was doing to labour, rather than penetrating the mirror and both revealing how labour was imposing itself against these and arming it better for self-liberation. Here I am again concerned with the contribution that recent literature on relations amongst labouring people at the capitalist periphery makes to their self-liberation. The items I have selected for consideration all have a direct relationship to labour in West Africa, even if the last of them represents a reflection on research in other parts of the capitalist periphery also. Collectively they reveal a shift in the focus of attention, a shift that suggests a welcome broadening from the terms of the labour aristocracy debate but also a certain danger of side-stepping crucial issues that that debate raised. In terms of approach, purpose and method they are varied. There are amongst them marxist, marxisant and a traditional orthodox sociological item. But I am here less concerned with establishing a certain theoretical position than in identifying the political implications of the shift in focus that they commonly represent.

The four works to which I wish to refer are those of Meillassoux and Bagayogo (1980), Sandbrook (1981), Peil (1981a) and Bromley and Gerry (1979).[3] The first is one of the few studies in French on the working class in Africa, and also one of the few drawing on the experience of Francophone West Africa. The second deals with Africa in general but draws quite heavily on studies of West Africa, and even refers specifically to workers in Lagos Port. The third is based on a survey of West African cities and suburbs, and it includes the Lagos district of Ajegunle in which Lagos port and dock workers live. The fourth is itself a collective and comparative work, dealing with casual labour in peripheral capitalist cities, but one of the authors deals

with a West African city, and the introduction and conclusion to the work inevitably deal with the relationship between different types of labour. Let us consider them individually before discussing them collectively.

The purpose of Meillassoux and Bagayogo (henceforth M&G) is, at least in part, to establish whether under present conditions

> The African proletariat...is capable of 'transforming itself' and developing into a social class of workers entirely and organically tied to the development of capitalism. (5).[4]

The 'present conditions' are characterised as the predominance of the national and international migration of peasants, dependent on their impoverished villages for security and reproduction, working in the cities or abroad for international capitalism:

> Divided between his own and his employing country, or between his village and the enterprise for which he works, the African proletarian sees this situation but imperfectly. This proletariat is African only geographically, by origin or nationality. Economically, it is always a 'foreign' proletariat, in the sense of being employed and exploited, almost entirely, by European or American capitalism. Its economic belonging is distinct from its national and political one. Even if consisting of citizens of supposedly independent states, its employment and pay depend on the decisions of enterprises that are nearly all foreign or multinational. (6).

M&G state that whilst it is in the longterm and general interest of capitalism to bring about complete proletarianisation, it is in its shortterm interest to have a good part of the labour costs borne by the non-capitalist sector in the villages. Within the cities one sees the development of a dual labour market: one is for relatively skilled and stabilised labour, which must therefore be provided with social security and pay sufficient for urbanisation; the other is for unskilled labour, which can be paid a below-subsistence wage and be either allowed or forced to return periodically to the village. But, to this double labour market there corresponds a <u>triple</u> division of the proletariat:

> the integrated workers who could be considered a labour aristocracy, capable of supporting themselves and their families on the basis of their wages and social security

> benefits;...the migrant workers receiving lower wages because they periodically return to their rural homes;...finally the uprooted workers having no more contact with the land, having finally quit their villages, but nonetheless in the same wage category as the previous fraction, and thus incapable of obtaining the total means necessary to ensure their social and demographic reproduction. It is this last fraction, increasing in number and incapable of finding more than occasional and temporary work that...serves as the reserve army of capital. (25).

M&G then investigate the extent to which the proletariat in Africa is 'integrated', drawing on evidence from Mali and Senegal. They consider as indicators of such integration the stability and continuity of employment, the nature of wage payment (piecework, daily, weekly, monthly), access to social security and capacity to organise. On this basis, and after examining the complex and differentiated labour and social security legislation inherited from the French, they determine that over 80 percent of Malian workers in the modern sector are not integrated, and that in Senegal an overwhelming and growing majority of such workers share this status. These findings, however, take no account of the second type of industrial enterprise in Africa, the tiny labour-intensive productive or service workshop in the so-called informal sector. Taking the case of Lomé (Togo), they find that the 'modern' part of this sector (wood, metal, building, electrical and mechanical services) provides for 20 percent of industrial wage employment and - if unpaid apprentices are included - 50 percent of industrial employment in this city. The apprentices are drawn from outside the capitalist or modern sectors and - indeed - they are required to pay for their apprenticeships. But this type of modern informal enterprise is providing a service to the large-scale modern sector by 1) purchasing from them overpriced inputs and 2) providing them or their workers with cheap goods and services. They conclude:

> The subordination of the domestic economy to the 'informal' sector - this being itself directly dependent on big capital - refutes the theses on the non-proletarian nature of the non-waged urban and rural workers of Africa. This is a proletariat forced into or continually returned to the swamp of relative over-population. (47).

Turning to the matter of organisation, M&G lay stress on the weakness of trade unions that must rest on the tiny industrial proletariat. Although unions based on the 'integrated fraction of the working class'

did exist in colonial times, and although unionised workers did show themselves capable of action at that time together with non-workers and leading to some successes, these unions were subjected after independence to destruction or incorporation. Today, therefore,

> The major popular political protest actions come from the secondary- or university-educated, from students and teachers, without any real connection with the working class having truly succeeded. Thus the defence of the integrated fraction of the proletariat takes place within weak unions, whilst that of other proletarian fractions is expressed by no mass organisation at all. (51).

The unions set up in the colonies by the Confédération Générale du Travail (the French Communist-controlled trade union centre) were on the European model, and failed to take into consideration the minority nature of the African proletariat:

> Failing to take on the organisation of the rural areas and to establish relations with the peasantry, the organic linkages between the domestic economy and the urban wage-force have remained strictly private. They have never been dealt with or taken into consideration in the programme of demands of the workers' unions. (49).

In a number of ways M&G seem to be offering us an up-dated, if more nuanced, version of the Arrighi and Saul thesis. This is not so much a matter of the use of the labour aristocracy category, since M&G confine this category to the integrated supervisors and technicians, and they do not in any case make any further use of it. The similarities lie in 1) the underlying dependency model, with capitalism primarily presented in terms of external impingement and expropriation, 2) reliance on economic analysis and categories in determining the nature and role of the working class, 3) reduction of such economic relations largely to market and consumption relations. Thus, the process of class formation is presented largely in terms of commercialisation and proletarianisation, i.e., what capital is doing to labour. Similar also to Arrighi and Saul is the establishment of worker consciousness and behaviour neither by research nor by consideration of the literature but by assertion. What M&G have added to the earlier thesis are 1) arguments concerning the destruction/preservation of non-capitalist forms in the interests of capitalism, 2) related arguments (and evidence, here) of the dual support provided by the 'informal sector' to the capitalist one, and 3) a somewhat different and more complex model of the divi-

sion of the proletariat. These new elements make the paper worthy of consideration, even if primarily in terms of hypotheses to be tested. What we are in fact presented with is an image of the simultaneous incorporation of petty-commodity production (both rural and urban) into a national and international capitalism, at the same time as the classical process of proletarianisation is being blocked. One does not have to accept the particular models offered (of enterprise scale, labour markets or proletarian status) in order to recognise the generality of the semi-proletarianisation they portray. But should we then be worrying ourselves about the incapacity of the proletariat to become a class 'entirely and organically tied to the development of capitalism'? For, where this process has largely taken place, in the industrialised capitalist countries, this has not (yet) implied capacity to destroy and surpass capitalist relations. Should we not rather be taking the structuring of the labour force in Africa as a datum and considering the capacities and potentialities for anti-capitalist struggle in this situation? Unfortunately, M&G confine their consideration of labour struggle to unions and strikes, and then do not even take into consideration (or mention) the major post-independence strikes in ex-French Africa - Congo-Brazaville 1963 and 1968, Senegal 1968, Madagascar 1972 (for which see Sandbrook 1981). Once again, this should not be taken as disqualifying their conclusion on the restricted character of the traditional trade unions, or the implication that one needs to find forms of organisation that will link the different parts of the labour force.

If M&B can be criticised for a failure to directly deal with the non-economic in analysing relations between labouring people in Africa, this can hardly be said of Richard Sandbrook. Sandbrook's purpose is to establish whether a 'social-democratic or revolutionary role' is likely to be played by the working class in the peculiar circumstances of contemporary tropical Africa (Sandbrook 1981:1). To do this he considers in turn the limits of proletarianisation, the labour aristocracy theory, populism amongst the workers, and the possibility of 'worker political consciousness'. This is an implicit comparison of the African working class with its European (or Russian) forebears. Sandbrook first establishes the incomplete proletarianisation of even the stable wage-force. It remains tied to the village through retention of land rights, through remitances and on retirement. For him, the whole working class is a semi-proletariat. The worker has both 'traditional' ties and interests in the village, and urban ones respecting employment, wages and prices. Yet, the unions make

> no connections between sociopolitical grievances and the workers' specific industrial

> grievances and protests. Obviously, the political effect of such an orientation on the part of powerful sectors of the working class is to stabilise the development of peripheral capitalism. (4).

Sandbrook then considers whether such an orientation can be explained in terms of labour aristocracy theory. He questions the logic of the theory, questions its economic determinism, and makes an empirical critique which draws on both well-known and more recent evidence concerning income differentials, living standards, etc. This is followed with more empirical evidence concerning common urban residence, common life styles and common aspirations with the rest of the urban poor, and the issue of mulitple job roles and job circulation amongst urban labourers. If, he concludes, 'economism is a common tendency among organised labour in Africa, the labour aristocracy thesis provides no general explanation for this' (13). In the section on populism he first argues that the lack of worker radicalism has been due to the absence of a 'vanguard group', and to the fact that in both the colonial and contemporary period unions (above the grass-roots level) have been essentially incorporated into the state. Nonetheless, says Sandbrook, 'In some parts of Africa, segments of workers have evolved at least a "populist", if non-revolutionary, political consciousness that transcends economism' (15). Here he places populism above economism but below revolutionary consciousness. Yet he also argues that populism is not a specifically working-class consciousness: it is rather the consciousness of the underprivileged as a whole, holding the elite responsible for its sufferings and investing all virtue in the common people. Whilst this provides a limited guide to effective political action, it has stimulated and found expression in major general strikes. In such strikes, which have occasionally brought governments down, there were expressed the demands not only of workers but of the urban masses more generally. This, says Sandbrook, indicates a capacity for rebellion but not for revolution. He therefore asks about the possibility for development of a working-class political consciousness - the idea of an 'economically dominant class enemy' and the 'control or transformation of certain economic and political institutions through collective action' as bringing the necessary change. (23). He considers the existence of long-established communities of dockers, railway and mine workers as providing a firm base for populism, and the growth of factory employment as likely to extend this. But even with further proletarianisation we cannot assume the development of a common working-class consciousness:

> In any specific case study, one needs to explain why, if workers' experiences on the job are similar, they develop a differential consciousness. (23).

Sandbrook considers as general politicising or depoliticising forces ethnicity, occupational community and education. A politicised ethnicity he finds compatible with a trade-union or populist consciousness, but not with a 'working-class political consciousness' (25). Occupational community (e.g. of miners or railway workers) can reinforce a working-class identity, especially if it is ethnically homogeneous, and can spread working-class attitudes to non-workers living around them. Finally, the disappointed expectations of the educated workers can stimulate consciousness and provide a stratum that could provide leadership to the less-educated workers. In conclusion, says Sandbrook,

> Any study of the political potential of African workers should focus upon the links between these and elements of the petite bourgeoisie, subproletariat and peasantry. Under current conditions, any popular movement limited to workers is unlikely to have much longterm political impact. (27-8).

It is evident that Sandbrook is trying, at the continental (or half-continental) level, to come to terms with the consciousness and behaviour of empirical (as distinguished from theoretical) African workers and trade unions. He is rejecting labour aristocracy theory and attempting to find more adequate concepts to deal with a more complex reality. Indeed, in dealing with evidence of communal and rural ties, and in his conclusions, he goes further along a line I may have suggested but did not explore. His treatment of residential community, of ethnicity and education as forces influencing class consolidation and expansion (to use my own terminology) also encourages a more-sophisticated and differentiated study of African workers. The major question is whether the conceptualisation is adequate to the analysis of this new data and the proposed new subject area. Sandbrook is one of the major critics of labour aristocracy theory, and one of the few who identifies its conceptual shortcomings, but he does not attempt to find its roots, and therefore does not find it necessary to develop an alternative conceptualisation. He accepts - though not uncritically - the standard Leninist formulae: the economic and the political (with or without quotes), truly working-class politics as either reformist or revolutionary (and populism, therefore as non-working class). His major qualification is the conversion of the two dichotomies into a trichotomy or spectrum by the insertion of populism between them. But, as already indicated, populism is not simply above economism in the hierarchy of working-class consciousness, it is also to one side. It is a consciousness common to the labouring poor, crude, limited, etc. It is linked by Sandbrook with peripheral capitalism, early industrialisation and unsuccessful rebellion. Sandbrook here raises

a crucial issue for the understanding of working-class consciousness, and for the political relations between differentially-proletarianised workers. He reveals the problem of a worker consciousness that is simultaneously more advanced and less working class than 'economism'. The solution to this puzzle would seem to lie in a recognition of the necessity for worker demands to be articulated with those of other classes and non-class social groups. This is, of course, the implication of the Laclau-Mouffe argument above (c.f. Laclau 1977:143-99 and Afonso 1980). Given the increasing impotence of both social-democratic and revolutionary (communist?) strategies in Europe and elsewhere - an impotence increasingly admitted by those within both traditions - the question of whether the populism of the West African working class is less advanced than the other strategies/ideologies is open to question. If we are to be able to understand the political potential of the African working class it would seem to me, further, that we will have to devote as much attention to the internal relations of the labour movement, and to its history, as to the class itself. Sandbrook has done this elsewhere (Sandbrook 1975). But here national union centres appear rather as instruments of state, and as anti-working class, than as themselves a terrain of struggle between workers (or even the grassroots union organisations) and capital. And analysis slides from workers opposed to unions, to 'powerful sectors' of workers whose orientation is such as 'to stabilise the development of peripheral capitalism'. Finally, I wonder whether Sandbrook's implicit understanding of the 'political' in terms of control over the state does not prevent him from considering the extent to which grassroots political struggle by workers has obstructed the development of peripheral capitalism - to such a point that the state has been obliged to attempt to incorporate their organisations (for a rural parallel in West Africa, see Van Hear 1983). These qualifications made, one cannot but endorse Sandbrook's conclusion on the limitations of purely worker movements, and his insistence of the necessity to study relations between these and those of the rest of the urban and rural labouring people.

The purpose of Margaret Peil is to demonstrate that the incorporation of workers into hometown-, kinship- and residence-based relations

> severely limits the development of an organised working class and even widespread commitment to trade unionism on a continuing rather than a sporadic basis. (Peil 1981:72).

Basing herself primarily on social survey data, she considers in turn the relations of waged (and self-employed) workers with their workmates, their kin and

other friends. After showing the variety of occupations and employment sectors in the eight towns under consideration, Peil declares that 'craft guilds are often more important than unions for skilled workers', that although unskilled dockworkers do strike, 'they have tended to seek individual rewards through theft or smuggling, rather than participating in group action' (77), that teachers have been the most militant government workers in Nigeria, and that white-collar workers have often provided literate leaders for the unions. In considering union membership more directly, she declares that unions are 'of negligible importance to a large majority of urban residents' (79), that unions attract mainly the easily-organisable (miners, railway workers, teachers), that members get little for their dues and often 'do not see the union as the logical place for...defence' (81). Her survey suggests to her that unions are irrelevant even to the majority of potential members, since they were hardly mentioned when people were asked about membership of voluntary organisations in general or trade unions in particular. Furthermore, the presence of top-level administrators within workers' unions is considered likely to discourage militancy. Overall,

> the data provide convincing evidence that unions as presently constituted do little to raise the class consciousness of the majority of workers. (84).

In considering informal contacts amongst workers, she suggests that these are more important than union ones, but she also finds that these are most developed amongst professionals, least amongst those least urbanised, educated or skilled. Contacts with kin and homeplace are strong amongst workers, particularly for those with most to gain (entrepreneurs and older workers). In all four industrial towns surveyed, she finds that 'primary associations' (ethnic, family, clan and hometown) have memberships much higher than in all kinds of occupational associations:

> Some members attend meetings of these societies once or twice a month, whereas once a year or only in emergencies is enough for attending trade union meetings. (89).

Peil finds that most people spend considerably more time with co-tenants and neighbours than with workmates. Speaking of friends she finds that half have one or more workmate friend, commonly met at work, that such ties are more permanent than those with non-workmates, but that these friends may be chosen for other reasons (e.g. shared ethnicity). Furthermore, there are many cross-class friendships and 'work is less important than either home or urban experience' in the selection of friends' (95). Her conclusions are the

following: 1) 'Society probably has a much greater effect on the workplace than vice versa; 2) there thus appear to be severe limitations on the spread of class consciousness 'from large bureaucratically-oriented workplaces to the general population'; 3) the workmates who do become friends are often selected on 'ascriptive grounds', 4) that

> If changes in social structure must await the development of mass movements arising from workplace relations, they will be very slow in coming. Increasing inflation and economic differentiation, blocked mobility and the level of responsiveness of national and local government to public demands, will probably affect the rate at which class consciousness develops in these societies to a greater extent than the influence of workers in industry or trade unionists. So far, these data seem to explain quite well the 'conservatism'...and 'populism'...of West African workers. (100-101).

Like Sandbrook, Peil is trying to shift the locus of studies of African workers from the workplace to the wider community. Unlike him, she does not consider any reconceptualisation necessary, establishing her position primarily on the basis of empirical data, this data being itself primarily survey data. She could, indeed, be understood as making an implicit criticism of the methodology employed by Sandbrook (or myself) when she declares of worker and union studies that

> an historical or statistical approach which concentrates exclusively on records or an informant approach which relies on union activists is likely to give a false impression.
>
> A problem that has dogged much of this research is that most of those engaged in it have had no systematic training in survey methods. While a few have tried small surveys, they know little about the techniques of conducting or analysing them and instinctively mistrust them. As a result, the marginals from less than 100 interviews, often with poorly framed questions, tell us little about how the majority of workers feel about trade unions. Surveys can tell only part of the story, but they would be an invaluable supplement to balance the data. (80).

This is no doubt true, both in the negative criticism and in the positive recommendation. One cannot but endorse the necessity of following up studies based on other methods with rigorous social surveys of workers

as Peil here recommends and has elsewhere carried out (Peil 1972, 1981b). The addition of such methods to the armoury of radical research on African workers has certainly added to their impact (Sandbrook and Arn 1972; Lubeck 1975b, 1979, 1981). Is the problem, however, simply one of expertise and rigour, or is it also one of the combination of survey with other evidence, and the general theoretical approach and conceptual equipment of the researcher? Such matters have been vigorously debated by researchers on African workers in the 1970s (Jorgensen 1978; Waterman 1978b; Konings 1978; Sandbrook and Arn 1978). Although Peil does not make her own theoretical approach explicit, it is evident that she is operating within an orthodox sociological paradigm. She employs such terms as 'traditional norms', 'primary associations' and 'ascriptive grounds', which imply a traditional/modern dichotomy, and contrasts 'industrialising societies' with industrialised western ones (characterised as 'post-capitalist'!)(99). Her survey methodology is also within an orthodox sociological tradition, in permitting her to consider any identified social structure or factor as an 'independent variable' for the study of behaviour and consciousness. Yet there would seem to be serious problems about applying the concept 'traditional' to West African villages deeply incorporated into the national and international capitalist economy in the ways that Meillasoux and Bagayogo have suggested, and subject to world market fluctuations, to state marketing boards, taxation, police and public schooling. Secondly, does one not need to present an argument for treating certain social structures as independent variables if one is not to give the impression of a uni-directional and structural determination of the social process? It is evidently possible to argue that industrial and occupational structures are themselves shaped by class attitudes and struggles. Survey research carried out within the framework of such an explicit assumption will evidently produce results different to those based on another. What Peil's survey does to is to supply additional evidence of the incorporation of West African workers into kinship, residence, friendship and rural relations outside the workplace. This confirms the argument of Sandbrook and is of utmost importance. But neither her survey nor her use of other authors would seem to support the string of assertions about unions, or the relations of workers with unions, or the influence of unions on urban labour in general. Her argument is supportive of labour aristocracy theory insofar as it stresses the leadership dominance of white-collar over other workers, union membership of top administrators, the non-organisation of unskilled dockers, the irrelevance of unions for the raising of class consciousness. But the assertions she makes, or the image she creates, is in conflict with most of the research which has been carried out on West African workers recently. Even the

two works she cites on the conservatism and populism of these workers (Waterman 1976 and Sandbrook and Arn 1977) were rather concerned to demonstrate the relative radicalism of organised workers than the opposite. This is not to detract from the relevance of her conclusion on the limits to consciousness-raising of unions 'as presently constituted' in West Africa. But it is to suggest that we need to combine direct observation of relations outside the workplace with those inside both the workplace and the unions. And it is to argue that it is necessary to carry out such studies on the basis of an explicit model and methodology.

The work of Bromley and Gerry (1979) is a collective work on casual labour in third world cities to which they both make contributions and to which they add a joint introduction and conclusion.[5] Although the collection deals with labour rather than labourers, and although it concentrates on casual labour, it is obliged to consider in detail at least the economic relations between this massive category and that urban minority in regular wage-employment. And it does spell out certain political implications of such relations. I will present in turn their approach, their economic analysis, their political analysis, and the implications for action they draw from these. Bromley and Gerry are concerned to reject the traditional assumptions underlying reformist/idealist (i.e. current international agency) strategies for 'informal sector' development at the capitalist periphery, and concerned to replace the category 'informal sector' itself. Their alternative model has been briefly mentioned in Chapter 4. They reject the dichotomic opposition of formal and informal sectors, proposing instead a continuum running from 'stable wage-work' to 'true self-employment' (5). We thus get a typology stretching from 1) true or indefinite-period wage work, through 2) short-term wage-work or casual labour, 3) disguised wage-work (e.g. outworkers, commission sellers) 4) dependent work (dependency for credit, rental of premises or equipment for supplies or sales), to 5) true self-employment. Such a typology of labour (which can be applied by analogy also to enterprises) permits, B&G argue, an examination of the relations between large and small enterprises, between enterprises and workers, between the state and the labour process more generally. Why the role of the state? Because of the significant role played by law in distinguishing between wage-work (category 1 and - to some extent - 2) and non-wage work (the other categories). It is, more specifically, legislation which marks category 1 off from the rest. The 'normal' wage contract provides for some or all of the following:

> minimum wages, regularised working hours, fixed overtime payments, 'minimum notice requirements' for both employer and employee,

> paid holidays, sickness benefit, redundancy pay, life insurance, and even access to subsidised consumer purchasing, mortgage, and public housing arrangements. (8).

Loss of work is normally (their emphasis) compensated for

> by various forms of social provision (sickness benefit, various forms of insurance, redundancy pay, pensions, unemployment benefits, etc.). (7).

B&G's replacement of a dichotomic opposition by a spectrum of employment statuses is certainly more realistic. Their treatment of the role of law in the structuring of the total labour process is an important addition to what has been said both by Meillassoux and Bamayogo and by myself. What is still open to question is the manner in which both innovations are used to divide - in dichotomic opposition - 'stable wage-work' from all other types of labour. They do qualify the opposition by their use of the word 'normal' with respect to the security of the 'stable wage-workers', but they then use this implied status to contrast it with 'the remainder of the continuum' (5). I will return to this later. In terms of the economic relation within the cities, what comes over most strongly from Bromley and Gerry is the intimate inter-relation of large-scale foreign and local-capitalist production on the one hand, and even the smallest-scale artisan production on the other. In his own contribution, dealing with forward and backward linkages of petty-production in Dakar, Gerry shows the extent to which even some 'traditional' crafts are dependent upon inputs (and imports) from large capitalist producers. In terms of the process occurring within the petty-production sector, Gerry shows the increasing trend to proletarianisation:

> Such relations may lead to formerly 'independent' petty producers losing all but nominal control of their production, themselves becoming little more than wage-workers, even though a pretence of autonomy is kept up on both sides...[T]his process may be partial, intermittent and, in the present context, sometimes appear to operate in reverse. In this latter case, the process of proletarianisation has not ceased, but has merely become more covert...Nevertheless, the fundamental mechanisms of exploitation (both through the labour process and the market) will be the same as in the factory...'. (246).

Gerry adds the 'small but noticeable' trend in the direction of 'capialisation', but he stresses the

limits to such a development not merely in the numbers who can benefit from it but the distance they can travel. The transformation is to petty-capitalism, not to large-scale industrial production. Because of the concentration of the B&G collection on the economic relationship, it has little to say about the political one. The overall image projected is one of the individualism, competitiveness and apathy of the petty-producers (248), and the conservatism and self-interest of the regularly employed. What political implications do they draw from their findings? Although distancing themselves somewhat from the term 'aristocracy of labour' they do in fact twice present organised wage workers as privileged, self-interested and opposed to the rest of the poor. Having, in their introduction, opposed 'stable wage-work' to other types they argue as follows:

> The tendency of government to respond to pressure from trade unions, associations of civil servants, the armed forces, the police, and other organised groups of workers with a degree of job security, and the pressures exercised upon governments by international organisations (and particularly the International Labour Office), tends to lead to an increasing provision for regulated job security. At times, provision may be extended to new groups of society, but the stronger tendency is for provision to remain concentrated upon a minority of workers, and to be improved for them, further differentiating this group from the casual workers. In many cases, industrial trade unions, the armed forces, and other organised groups who have attained a degree of job security, tend to behave as vested interest groups, concerned to preserve and improve their privileges, rather than to express solidarity with the large numbers of less privileged workers engaged in a variety of forms of casual employment. (9).

And in their conclusion they talk of

> a select group of coopted workers who contribute substantially...to the continued impoverishment of their less-favoured colleagues among the casual poor. (309).

Sceptical of the political capacities of both the casual labourers and the regularly-employed, B&G initially appear just as sceptical of the progressive potential of state strategies. These are treated as suicidal by Gerry, who considers that if third world governments continue with present policies toward the labouring poor 'their days will be numbered' (248). The

overall pessimism with respect to positive state policies, and the threat of mounting mass discontent in Gerry's account, is not matched by any evidence that the labouring poor are capable of toppling the regimes, nor any advice to them on how they might be able to do so. It seems as if an orientation (either positive or negative) toward the state as the only possible political power, leads the editors of this work to precisely that blatant idealism they hope to avoid:

> if we are to move from a world in which the manifest objectives have a strong chance of success...a revolution in policy making is essential...[which]...could prepare the ground for the attainment of authentically developmental objectives which would match the aspirations and potentialities of the mass of the population...(307).

It is most interesting to rediscover in Bromley and Gerry a similar set of features to those in Arrighi and Saul almost one decade earlier.[6] There is the critique of an earlier model as simplistic, there is the attempt to reconceptualise the problem in primarily economic terms, there is an asserted yet undemonstrated conflict between the regularly wage-employed and the rest of the poor, and one is left only with the state as a deus ex machina to solve the problem for the powerless or selfish labourers. Let us just reconsider the logic of the Bromley-Gerry argument. Firstly, whilst B&G recognise the problematic nature of the security and privileges of indefinite wage-work and the increasing instability of wage employment in the third world (15-19), they nonetheless use this as the criterion on which to base an opposition. Secondly, whilst they recognise the relationship between categories 1 and 2 (both wage-work, both recognised in law), do they not fail to recognise a crucial further one, that both are engaged in cooperative labour within capitalist enterprises? Thirdly, in discussing the political mechanism by which relative security is achieved by certain sectors of the wage-labour force, B&G group trade unions not only with civil service associations, but also with the army and the police - two types of wage labourer whose function (and not only at the capitalist periphery) is partly to repress restive wage workers.

It would seem that the replacement of a dichotomy by a spectrum is insufficient to overcome the shortcomings of labour aristocracy theory. What would seem to be needed is not - or not only - a finer or longer scale for the identification of differential wealth or security within a national or international capitalist system but 1) the identification of labouring people as the source of the power and wealth that is taken and used (differentially) to manipulate them, 2) a theory

of class relations within different modes/forms of production, and 3) a direct examination of the political struggles of labourers within these forms, and of the relations of such struggles to each other. The combination of a model of relations between modes/forms (Gerry) and the other elements would enable one to analyse the significance of differential position within the wealth/security hierarchy. And it would also suggest both the possibility and the necessity for the combined protest of labouring people. The possibility of such combination is demonstrated not only by such rare occurences as social revolutions, but also in the increasing numbers of urban uprisings and general strikes in the 1970s and 1980s brought on by the proletarianisation process Gerry indicates, and in such modest complementary (if separate) worker protest actions as those shown in this study.

At the beginning of this section I said I was primarily interested in the political implications of these recent studies. Here I would like to try to identify both positive and negative implications. I think that the most important contribution that they make is the identification of a new problem area. The shift of attention will contribute to the death of labour aristocracy theory, inasmuch as old theories die not merely by direct criticism but also by atrophy of interest. The new problem area is that of the relations of the better-paid and more-securely employed wage-earners with other labouring people either 1) as urban residents, or 2) in terms of relations on a waged-unwaged axis, either urban or rural, or 3) as all - but differentially - semi-proletarianised. With the explicit addition of relations between waged men and women (waged or not), this suggests not only a broad terrain for research but a broad area for political activity in creating an anti-capitalist movement. If full proletarianisation is blocked, in the manner that most of these writers suggest, this need not be seen only as a disqualification for effective anti-capitalist struggle. As Gould (1979) has pointed out, whilst working-class struggle is 'the main locus of overt, organised anti-capitaist struggle' even at the periphery of capitalism, we can and need to

> seek out aspects of the 'non-capitalist' social structure which can play a positive role in deflecting the onslaught of capital. (30).

The second important contribution of these writers lies in the critique of trade unions 'as presently constituted'. The implicit or explicit argument here is that union forms and strategies based on European models are irrelevant to the pattern of proletarianisation in contemporary Africa. This point is acceptable providing it is recognised that tradtional trade union forms are

also increasingly irrelevant to contemporary patterns of proletarianisation in Eastern and Western Europe. For Eastern Europe this has been vividly demonstrated by the rise of Solidarity in Poland, and the attempts to link urban and rural workers within its folds (Szlajfer 1981). In Western Europe it lies more in recognition of the immobility and impotence of the unions, and in suggestions of the necessity for a broader social role (Ross 1981). This said, we are still left with the necessity to fashion alternative forms of organisation and action appropriate to the particular structure and capacities of African labourers. This will require research, discussion and - above all - experimentation by the movement itself. So much for the positive aspect of the new studies.

What of the negative side? Firstly, a cautionary note: I am wondering whether the new focus on the waged-unwaged axis does not mean an abandonment of certain other terrains of research and struggle with which this work has been concerned. The first is that of workplace organisation and struggle itself. In the case of both independent and racist Africa, there can be no doubt that the workplace is 'the main locus', and if our authors in general question whether workplace struggle is really 'anti-capitalist', then I can only hope that either the body of this work or its conclusion suggest that it is. What we therefore need are more studies of both the institutionalised and overt forms of worker protest (such as this one has been) and of the informal and 'hidden forms' (see, again, Chapter 13, Footnote 1). Another terrain which will require continued attention is the axis running 'up' to the intermediate salaried strata. It is no use shifting the concept of labour aristocracy up here, or considering them in 'conventional historical' terms as simply middle class. Examination of this axis is necessary for several reasons. In the first place, it is amongst such strata that much of the power and knowledge denied those in routine clerical or manual labour is concentrated. In the second place, the contradictory status of these strata means that they can potentially be won by the labour movement. In the third place, as has been pointed out, paid union leaderships can and do stand in an analogous position to workers within the labour movement as do the middle strata within society more generally. Study of the manual/mental division, in other words, is necessary both for the extension of worker control over their own organisations and over the society as a whole.

Another shortcoming of these studies is - I feel - the lack of a comparative perspective. This is implied above where I refer to the international crisis of traditional union forms. All these writers tend to present the problem of relations between different kinds of worker or labouring people as a specifically

African (or 'third world') one. In so far as comparison is made it is with European models that are either implicit (real proletarianisation) or presented in an uncritical or idealised fashion (social-democracy and communism as really working class). It may be for the same reason that struggles of not only the unions but of the workers themselves and of other popular forces are presented (excepting Sandbrook with respect to the workers) in a pessimistic light. Comparison is here either explicitly or implicitly being made with a model of reformist or revolutionary achievement elsewhere in the world. However, recent studies of - for example - the West European and American working class and labour movements have themselves been increasingly recognising divisions either identical or analogous to those identified by our authors. There has also been increasing recognition of the limitations on post-revolutionary regimes in Europe, Asia and Africa itself. Much of the new theory used in this work has been developed on the basis of such recognitions. This does not mean that we should return to either proletarian or peasant or lumpenproletarian messianism. But that reference to international experience may enable us to avoid both a messianism that will lead to adventures and disappointments and a pessimism that inevitably cedes the power of social change to the rich and powerful. One final problem with these studies is connected with this last point. This is that (with, again, the partial exception of Sandbrook) even the socialist writers amongst this group do not see the problem of division primarily as a policy problem for the labour movement. Unless one addresses oneself either explicitly or implicitly to the existing social movement, one is likely to be providing information or advice - explicitly or implicitly - to the rich and powerful. Addressing oneself to the existing movement is a problem fraught with traps and dangers. But it does require one to come to terms with the movement as it exists, with its capacities and shortcomings. And, in our case, this does mean recognising the trade unions as the only organisational form that African workers have and the only permanent and effective organisation of labouring people in Africa. It is not without significance that the revival of mass movement in South Africa itself has taken primarily the trade union form (Saul and Gelb 1981; Fine, de Clerq and Innes 1981).

## 6. A politics implied

As I said above, addressing oneself to the existing movement is a problem. I would not, for example, like to translate my general findings and judgements, as they have developed during this work, into a detailed policy recommendation on 'how to overcome divisions amongst Nigerian workers'. It is not simply a matter of the presumption of such advice from an outsider who will never have to practice what he is

preaching. It is also the suggestion such advice would carry that division is a problem (i.e. isolable and soluble within an otherwise unchanged environment or structure). In reality, division is the problem for the Nigerian and all other labour movements. Division, in other words, is one manner of expressing the subordination of labouring people to capital and state. One cannot solve this problem without solving the others. Or, again in other words, we can say that division will only be overcome in the process of the general struggle. I hope that I have in this work said enough about division amongst workers - and how to recognise, classify and analyse it. I hope I have either in the body of the work or here in the Conclusion said enough about the necessity and the broader implications of another approach to division amongst workers. The rest should surely be left to Nigerian socialists and unionists.

But to whom, exactly, is the problem being left? We have seen in the work the extent to which the problem of division is also the problem of labour leaders (Nigerian) and socialist theorists/strategies (international). Yet it is evident that the very form of this study is one that makes it primarily accessible to academically-trained intellectuals, socialist or not. In the Introduction I mentioned that I had produced other items during the course of this project, products meant to be accessible to labour activists and even to ordinary workers. This one is inevitably addressed primarily to my colleagues and has been intended to win their respect (if not their agreement) by demonstrating certain professional skills and a certain originality. But it is also addressed to the new generation of intellectuals in Nigeria (and elsewhere in Africa and the third world). And here it is a quite specific message. Because what is being offered is largely an approach to the analysis of African working-class struggles from a frankly European and American perspective. Yet it is offered without apology, because the theory has been based on the struggle of socialist intellectuals here to themselves come to terms with their own labour movements. It is a curious fact, as Friedland points out, that revolutionary theory has been not so much an export from the capitalist centre to the periphery, but from the periphery (Russia, China, Cuba, Vietnam) to the centre. In the latter, thus,

> the relevance of revolutionary experience and the analysis conducted by revolutionary theorists is not immediate and direct. Rather, the application of these ideas represents a challenge to evolving revolutionary theory. (Friedland et.al. 1982:xiii).

Well, most of the theory used in this work has come out

of the attempt by Western socialists to meet the challenge Friedland mentions. And here it is, being offered back to socialist intellectuals (academically or self-educated) at the capitalist periphery, to see what value they can find in it. I await their response with curiousity. And hope. Because if they do find it helpful, it may suggest that it has been based not on the experience of a nation or a bloc of nations, but on the international experience of proletarianisation and working-class self-formation. And that the conditions for the development of a common theory and strategy for a genuinely international working-class movement are at last, gradually, coming into existence.

NOTES

1. A certain tradition and a number of forums for debate on labour in peripheral capitalist societies has built up over the last decade in a series of conferences and associated monographs, collections and journals. Conferences and seminars with overlapping participation have been held in Toronto (1973), The Hague (1975), Montreal (1980) and New Delhi (1981). These have found expression, respectively, in Sandbrook and Cohen (1975), Waterman (ed.) (1979), in the monographs and discussion papers of the Centre of Developing Area Studies, McGill University, Montreal, and in Human Futures (1981). The CDAS journal, previously Manpower and Unemployment Research, now Labour, Capital and Society, has provided a permanent forum for debate (see, in particular, M&UR Vol. 10, No.2, 1977 and Vol.11, No.1, 1978). Special characteristics of this tradition have been the policy-relevant orientation and the attempt to involve labour activists in the proceedings. Both features run the risk of adding partisan political polemic to the traditional academic one. But, overall, it has been possible for participants to engage in debate, respond positively to criticism, and to return for more.

2. The point is made somewhat differently by Albert and Hahnel (1978), who in the course of an extended critique of traditional marxism say that

> Another problem of the orthodox approach is its unnecessary extension of a justified critique of ahistoricism into a disdain for attempts to understand historical continuity. As much as one may be interested in revolution and concerned to promote historical 'leaps', it is a fact that long periods of relative quiescence and evolutionary continuity are more common conditions...We

> need a method which helps us understand tendencies toward reproduction as well as revolution. Why do ideas often persist long after they have been logically refuted, even long after they serve anyone's objective material interests?...When reproductive tendencies clash with revolutionary forces which will 'win'? (55. Original stress).

Further:

> Offering no insights into why people don't rebel, the theory is of little help to activists attempting to help people overcome these barriers. How should activists talk, what issues should be raised, how should old views be uprooted and new ones expressed, what tactics best mobilise different groups of people? None of these questions is addressed by the epic scale of historical materialism. Instead they are addressed on a rather ad hoc basis by a variety of strategic designs that are not at all closely tied to the overriding social theory. (65).

3. The items of both Sandbrook and Peil are both based on or drawn from research that has later appeared in greatly-extended book form. I received these books only as I was completing this chapter and regret that I have been therefore unable to take advantage of their findings in this work. Sandbrook (1982) not only provides a masterly survey and synthesis of research on urban problems and classes in Africa but ends with a chapter directly addressing the strategic options facing both African and international labour movements. Peil 1981b) contains a mass of survey data on West African cities which will certainly provide us with a far better basis for an understanding of social relations amongst the urban poor then heretofore. I hope on another occasion to give them the attention they deserve.

4. All translation is by myself.

5. The argument concerning Bromley and Gerry is largely drawn from Waterman (1981).

6. Curiously enough, one of the significant differences from the Arrighi-Saul model is precisely that replacement of a dichotomy by a spectrum that Saul himself had recommended (Saul 1975:310, f.n.13).

# APPENDIX 1

## The Port and Dock Worker Interview Schedule

1. How old are you?
   a) Less than 25?
   b) 25 - 39?
   c) 40 or over?

2. Please tell us about your schooling?
   a) How many years of education have you had altogether?
   b) What types of school or college have you attended?
   c) What is your highest qualification?

3. What is your mother tongue (language)?

4. What language do you mostly speak?
   a) At work?
   b) Other times?

5. Where did you mostly live when growing up?
   a) State?
   b) Place?

6. Are you married?

7. How many children have you?

8. If you attend church/chapel/mosque
   a) What is it called?
   b) How many times a month?

9. If you are in a savings/benefit club or isusu
   a) How much do you pay in weekly?
   b) Are its other members
      i) Work mates?
      ii) Fellow tribesmen?
      iii) Neighbours?

10. What is or was the work of
    a) Your father?
    b) Your senior brother?
    c) Your best friend?

11. If married, what is the occupation of
    a) Your wife's father?

b) Your wife?
c) Your senior child?

12. How old wre you when you first started work?

13. What job do you do?

14. How would you describe it?

a) Unskilled labourer?
b) Semi-skilled labourer?
c) Skilled artisan?
d) Clerk?
e) Supervisor?
f) Engineer/Technician?
9) Manager?
h) Other (write out answer in column)

15. How long have you been at this workplace?

a) Less than a year?
b) Between 1 to 5 years?
c) Between 6 to 10 years?
d) More than 10 years?

16. How many different places have you worked in?

17. Have you ever lost your job and been unemployed?

a) I have never lost my job
b) Unemployed up to 6 months
c) Unemployed 6 months to 1 year
d) Unemployed more than 1 year

18. What is your pay rate either
a) Per day?
b) Per week?
c) Per month?

19. Outside of your regular job, do you do any trading, craft, business or other work to get extra money? If so,

a) What sort of work is it?
b) About how much weekly do you get from it?

20. Are you a member of a trade union?

21. What is the name of your trade union?

22. Do you pay money to your union?

23. If you pay regularly, how much per month?

24. At your workplace who is

a) The president of the union

b) The secretary of the union
c) Don't know

25. Is your secretary paid by the union?

a) Yes
b) No
c) Don't know

26. Does your union belong to

a) United Labour Congress?
b) Nigeria Workers Council?
c) Nigerian Trade Union Congress/Federation?
d) None of these?
e) Don't know

27. If you go to union meetings

a) How many times this year (in 1975)?
b) When did you last go?

28. Have you ever been on strike in your life?

29. If you have been on strike, how many times?

30. Which was the biggest strike you have taken part in?

a) Which workplace?
b) Year?
c) Number of days?

31. Have you ever taken part in any other kind of protest?

32. If so, what was its nature?

a) Work-to-rule or go-slow?
b) Petition letter to management?
c) Street demonstration?
d) Other protest (write out)?

33. In which part of Lagos do you live?

34. How much is your monthly rent?

35. What is your daily transport cost from home to work and back?

# APPENDIX 2

## The Open-Ended Interviews

Carried out in 1975 and 1976, these interviews were intended to obtain an impression of values of port and dockworkers, of ordinary workers and union officers. Selection of workers depended on the opportunity at place of work to speak with workers in the absence of supervisors. Interviews were carried out in the preferred language of interviewes, and with the help of the assistants who worked on the survey. The questions were as follows:

1. Tell me about the work or trade you would most like to do if you could choose.

2. Do you <u>really think</u> you have any chance to do this in the next five years?

3. Do you think it is good that private contractors should own and control the dock labour industry in Lagos or do you think there should be something different?

4. What about government control of NPA? Do you think this is alright or that something should be changed?

5. Tell me what you think about the supervisors and senior staff in your workplace and industry?

6. Tell me in what way you think that it might be possible to get workers to work better in your workplace and industry.

7. Do you think that either in <u>Lagos Port</u>, or elsewhere <u>in Lagos</u>, or in <u>Nigeria</u>, that there are some people who are brothers in arms to NPA/dock (as appropriate) workers? Who?

8. And now tell me if you think that there are some groups of people in the <u>Port</u>, in <u>Lagos</u>, or in <u>Nigeria</u>, who are enemies to you and your brothers in arms?

9. How do you think that the ordinary workers and poor people in Nigeria can get the power to get what they desire?

10. Do you know of some groups of people in foreign countries who are brothers in arms to the Nigerian workers? Who?

# APPENDIX 3

## Union Officer Interview Schedule

### A. THE UNION

1. Name of Union?

2. Address of Union?

3. When was that Union founded?

4. Who are the principle officers?
   a. President?
   b. General Secretary?
   c. Treasurer?

5. How did you get your position?
   a. Election by whole membership?
   b. Election at regular conference?
   c. Appointment?

6. If the union has branches, list them with strength.

7. By union rules, who are allowed to join?

8. How much is the union entrance fee?

9. How much is the dues monthly?

10. What percentage or proportion of your members pay dues?
    a. Regularly?
    b. Irregularly?
    c. Not at all?

11. Why do you think members fail to pay dues?

12. How does the union collect dues?
    a. Collectors?
    b. Check-Off?

13. Does anything prevent your union getting check-off?

14. What official arrangements do you have for accounting of union funds?

15. If monthly dues are distributed, what percentage goes to
    a. National headquarters?
    b. Branches?

16. On joining the union, do members get
    a. Membership card?

b. Constitution/rules of union?

17. What services do members get from the union?

18. Has your union tried to amalgamate with others?

19. If amalgamation attempts have failed, why?

20. Do you inform members of union decisions mostly by
    a. Person to person talk?
    b. By newspaper or bulletin?
    c. At local meetings?

21. How can members influence headquarters decisions?

22. If your union is in NPA, has it ever taken action of any kind with Dock Contractor workers?

23. If you union is for dock contractor workers, has it taken action of any kind with NPA workers?

24. If your union has taken such action, was it
    a. Solidarity strike?
    b. Request for solidarity strike?
    c. Declaration of support?
    d. Request for support?
    e. Donation of money or other assistance?
    f. Request for money or other assistance?
    g. Give details of this or other action.

25. Has the union any working relationship with any other organised groups, such as credit unions, cooperatives, youth clubs, women associations, farmer associations, etc? If so, give details.

## B. LABOUR RELATIONS

1. What is the procudure for settling
    a. Worker complaints in the workplace?
    b. Union complaints against management?

2. How are wages and conditions determined in your workplace?
    a. Collective bargaining?
    b. Staff regulations?
    c. General orders?

3. Which of the above three is most commonly used and why?

4. Who decides which claims should be put to employers in the workplace?
    a. Union conference?
    b. Union executive?
    c. General Secretary
    d. Meeting of members?

5. If negotiations break down, who decides on the form of protest action (strike, go-slow, demonstration, etc.)?
   a. Mass meeting of members?
   b. Union executive?
   c. General Secretary personally?

6. What do you consider to be the main labour relations problem in the workplace?

7. What is the solution to this problem?

C. NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CENTRES

1. To which national centre is your union affiliated?

2. How many years has it been so affiliated?

3. If your union was once affiliated to another national centre,
   a. Give name
   b. Give date
   c. Give reason for leaving it

4. To what other union organisation is your union affiliated?
   a. In the industry?
   b. Nationally?
   c. African continent?
   d. Internationally?
   e. Other

5. Has your union today or in the past had aid, in money, education, advice or equipment from
   a. International Trade Secretariat?
   b. ICFTU, WFTU, WCL/IFCTU?
   c. African-American Labour Centre?
   d. Other?

D. THE LEADER

1. Present employer (if employed other than by the union)?

2. Your trade and occupation now (if employed other than by the union)?

3. Previous trades and occupations?

4. Are you a full-time paid union officer?

5. If answer to 4 is 'yes', what is your official monthly pay?

6. If you are a parttime officer, how much do you

get as a fee or honorarium for union work per year?

7. If you have attended trade union education, mention most important courses.

# APPENDIX 4

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O. Nigerian Ports Authority Craftsmen and Allied Workers Association: Second Conference (1972)

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4. NPA Unions and Associations
5. NPA Trade Unions: Miscellaneous
6. NPA Trade Unions: Structure
7. Nigerian Marine African Workers Union
8. Nigerian Maritime Trade Union Federation
9. Nigerian Maritime Workers Union
10. Nigerian Transport and General Workers Union
11. NPA Craftsmen and Allied Workers Association
12. NPA Firemen, Greasers, Technical and General Workers Union
13. NPA Joint Committee for Representation
14. NPA Junior Supervisory Staffs Association
15. NPA Officers Association
16. NPA Sports Association
17. Marine Engineering Staffs Association of Nigeria
18. NPA Workers Union
19. Railways and Ports Transport and Clerical Staffs Union
20. Railways and Ports Workers Union of Nigeria

B. Dock Labour Contractors (general) files

21. Contractor organisation
22. Contractor labour
23. Contractor industrial relations
24. Dock labour unions to 1966: general
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26. Amalgamated Dock Workers Transport and General Workers Union (United Labour Congress affiliated) 1966-78
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C. Biney and Co. Ltd. files

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31. Biney unions

D. Trade unions (general) files

32. Trade union international

33. Trade union leaders

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64. Labour force.

65. Industrial relations.

66. Portworker and dockworker unionism, 1940s-1960s.

67. Portworker unionism in the 1970s.

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69. Labour protest action.

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## SAMENVATTING

### 'ARISTOCRATEN' EN 'PLEBEJERS' IN AFRIKAANSE VAKBONDEN? DE STRIJD EN ORGANISATIE VAN HAVENARBEIDERS IN LAGOS

Deze studie behandelt de politieke verdeeldheid tussen 'rijke' en 'arme' havenarbeiders. Het onderzoek richt zich op de haven van Lagos. Er is hier een duidelijk onderscheid waar te nemen tussen de 'rijke' arbeiders die regelmatig werk hebben bij de Nigeriaanse staatshavens (Nigerian Ports Authority = NPA) en de 'arme' arbeiders (contract arbeiders) die onregelmatig in de havens werken voor particuliere koppelbazen. De NPA-arbeiders hebben in het algemeen de lagere school doorlopen, hebben permanent werk, zijn verstedelijkt, zijn georganiseerd in vakbonden, en doen het administratieve en technische werk dat nodig is om de industriele infrastructuur in stand te houden, even als het onderhouds- en rekenwerk dat in de haven gedaan moet worden. De contractarbeiders zijn meestal ongeschoold, werken onregelmatig, zijn ten dele verstedelijkt, nauwelijks georganiseerd, en verrichten vooral het ongeschoolde handenarbeid, zoals het laden en lossen van schepen, lichters, stapels, loodsen, vrachtwagens en treinen. De NPA-arbeiders lijken goed geintegreerd te zijn in hun bedrijf, de contractarbeiders lijken opstandig. Tegen het einde van de zestiger jaren organiseerden de NPA-arbeiders zich in toenemende mate in vakbonden die op het gebied van arbeidsverhoudingen een liberale ideologie tentoonspreidden en die verbonden waren met de rechtse nationale vakcentrale. Die was op haar beurt weer geaffilieerd met reformistische Westerse vakbonden, met de Internationale Arbeids Organisatie en met de multinationals. In dezelfde periode werden de stakingen van de contractarbeiders steeds meer aangevoerd door radicale activisten van de linkse vakcentrale, die op haar beurt verbonden was met de internationale communistische beweging.

Op het eerste gezicht hebben we hier te doen met een illustratie van de 'arbeidersaristocratie-theorie'. Volgens deze theorie, die voor Afrika voor het eerst in de zestiger jaren werd gepresenteerd, is het 'eigenlijke proletariaat' van industriearbeiders economisch bevoorrecht boven, en sociaal geisoleerd van, de 'halfgeproletariseerde boeren', een groep van onregelmatige

werkende en trekkende arbeiders. De eerste groep wordt beschouwd als zich identificerend met de lokale elite en sub-elite en met het internationale kapitalisme. De tweede groep wordt verondersteld zich te identificeren met de boerenmassa's. Terwijl de eerste categorie als in wezen conservatief wordt gezien, wordt de tweede als radicaal beschouwd, tenminste in aanleg.

Deze studie stelt niet alleen het empirische bewijs voor de arbeidersaristocratie-theorie ter discussie, maar ook de voornaamste gehanteerde concepties, de methodologie en de politieke implicaties. De theorie wordt hier niet zozeer als een vergissing behandeld alswel als een mythe. Als zodanig vertegenwoordigd ze een denkbeeldige uitdrukking van een belangrijke sociale realiteit, en vormt ze een obstakel voor effectieve massa-actie om die realiteit te veranderen. Het echte probleem, zo wordt in eerste instantie betoogd is dat van het 'ongelijke proletarische bewustzijn en de industriele verdeeldheid'. Deze proletarisatie is - en is altijd al een kwestie geweest - van de gelijktijdige verdeling en eenmaking van de loonarbeiders. Als we de verschillen in bewustzijn en gedrag van de arbeiders willen begrijpen, dan moeten we nader de situatie binnen de arbeidsverdeling bezien, met inbegrip van 'situaties in de arbeidsverdeling die bestaat binnen de arbeidersbeweging'.

Deze studie kan hiermee worden geplaatst in het kader van een debat tussen socialistische en andere radicale wetenschaps-beoefenaars en eveneens in de contekst van de marxistische discussie. Gebruik wordt gemaakt van de geschriften van die hedendaagse marxisten (en anderen) die getracht hebben theoretisch greep te krijgen op verdeeldheid binnen klassen, en binnen de arbeidersbeweging, en op de bijzonderheden van de klassevorming in de perifere kapitalistische maatschappij. Aanvankelijk wordt verondersteld dat de theorie van de arbeidersaristocratie een afwijking is van de marxistische traditie. In de loop van deze studie echter wordt deze traditie zelf ter discussie gesteld. De conclusie suggereert de noodzaak van een radicale breuk met het orthodoxe marxisme-leninisme.

De case-study maakt een nauwkeurig onderzoek mogelijk naar de politieke verhoudingen tussen zowel ieder van de arbeiders categorieën als daarbinnen. Aandacht wordt geschonken aan de verhouding tussen vakbonden en kapitaal en staat, aan de relatie tussen achterban en leiders (industrieel, nationaal en internationaal), en aan activiteiten die collectief arbeidersprotest uitdrukken. De conclusie is dat de rijk-arm-verdeling er slechts een is uit een hele reeks, en niet noodzakelijkerwijs de belangrijkste. Terwijl deze studie geplaatst kan worden binnen de traditie van socialistische studies van de Nigeriaanse arbeidsprolematiek, wordt uiteengezet dat deze een aanzien-

lijke verrijking daarvan is omdat ze zich bezighoudt met de problematiek van de organisatie van de arbeiders. Opmerkelijke overeenkomsten en verschillen worden ook vastgesteld ten aanzien van recent marxistisch en niet-marxistisch onderzoek naar de Afrikaanse arbeider meer in 't algemeen. Er worden geen specifieke beleidsaanbevelingen gedaan, maar de studie is er wel op gericht een bijdrage te leveren aan het oplossen van het probleem van verdeeldheid. In verband hiermee wordt de algemene teneur van dit proefschrift uiteengezet.

De Inleiding beschouwt zowel de oorspronkelijke arbeidersaristocratie-theorie als het debat waartoe deze aanleiding gaf. De oorspronkelijke theoretici waren Marx, Engels en Lenin. Geconfronteerd met het niet-revolutionaire gedrag van het Europese proletariaat, hanteerden zij het 19-eeeuwse concept van een bevoorrechte en conservatieve groep onder de arbeiders als verklaring hiervoor. Echter zelfs in het klassieke gebruik had de arbeidersaristocratie-theorie verschillende bewijsvoeringen en doelstellingen. Ze werd toegepast op de arbeidersklasse als geheel, op een deel daarvan, op niet-proletarische loonarbeiders, op leden van bepaalde bonden, of op arbeidersleiders. De theorie werd gebruikt om zowel conservatisme binnen een nationale arbeidersklasse te verklaren als het conservatisme van een hele groep van nationale arbeidersklassen. Door deze onnauwkeurige en theoretische niet-doordachte toepassing worden ook begrippen, als het 'lompenproletariaat' en de 'half-geproletariseerde boeren' hiermee geassocieerd. De werkwijze is gelijk: eerst wordt de 'echte' rol van de arbeidersklasse vastgesteld, daarna wordt gedrag dat daarvan afwijkt verklaard in termen van perifere economische categorieen. Terwijl voor de orthodoxe marxisten 'het proletariaat an sich' de 'werkelijk revolutionaire klasse' blijft hebben anderen een andere conceptuele oplossing aanvaard. Zij beschouwen het hele proletariaat als een arbeidersaristocratie, en zoeken revolutionaire macht bij de boeren, het lompenproletariaat of de half-geproletariseerden. Het vlak waarop deze andere theoretici overeenkomst vertonen met de orthodoxe marxisten is niet zozeer het gebruik van dezelfde begrippen, alswel het zoeken naar die ene belangrijke doodgraver van het kapitalisme en dat ene bevoorrechte kerkhof.

Voor Afrika is de arbeidersaristocratie-theorie het best uiteengezet door Arrighi en Saul. Zij beweerden dat er een overeenkomst in belangen zou zijn tussen het internationale kapitalisme en het Afrikaanse proletariaat, die weer gemeenschappelijke belangen hebben tegenover de half-geproletariseerde trek- en tijdelijke arbeiders. De eerste reaktie op Arrighi en Saul kwam in de vorm van een empirische weerlegging, maar de critici misten de kern van de zaak voorzover ze zich beperkten tot het aantonen van de empirische fouten. Weliswaar kan de theorie op basis van de empirie weerlegd worden:

de economische, sociale en politieke beweringen zijn eenvoudigweg onjuist, inadequaat, of misleidend. Het probleem dat hierachter ligt is echter dat van een onjuiste conceptualisering: het concept en zijn tegenpool (de halfgeproletariseerde boerenklasse) staan in een ambivalente en veranderende verhouding en vertegenwoordigen zo veeleer een logische dan een sociologische tweedeling. Aan deze onjuiste concepties liggen methodologische fouten ten grondslag: 1) het poneren van tweeledige tegenstellingen, in plaats van een dialectische benadering van de arbeidersklasse als structuur en proces; 2) het uitgaan van een simplistische economische determinatie van gedrag en bewustzijn van de arbeidersklasse. De critici hebben bovendien de conservatieve politieke implicaties van de theorie amper gezien: deze is verbonden met een etatistische opvatting van sociale verandering en socialisme en met een elitaire opvatting van leiderschap. Als een meer bevredigend uitgangspunt voor het werkelijke probleem dat de theorie en zijn critici niet hebben onderkend, wordt gesuggereerd dat proletarisering overal een kwestie is - en altijd geweest is - van de gelijktijdige verdeling en eenmaking van de loonarbeiders. Het is daartoe noodzakelijk, niet uitsluitend de situatie binnen de arbeidsverdeling te onderzoekan maar ook de situatie in de arbeidsverdeling binnen de arbeidersbeweging zelf.

Na een alternatieve orientatie op het probleem van de verdeeldheid te hebben voorgesteld, gaat de Inleiding verder (in Deel 4) met het uitwerken van een fundamenteel andere benadering, waarbij uitbuiting, onderdrukking en de fundamenteel revolutionaire rol van de arbeiders-klasse binnen de kapitalistische maatschappij aan de orde komt. Dit wordt nader toegelicht door te verwijzen naar: 1) de betekenis van fundamentele economische strijd, 2) de noodzaak van aktie van de achterban om de bonden te stimuleren deze strijd te boven te komen, 3) de noodzaak voor socialisten om onder de in het algemeen niet-socialistische arbeiders te werken, 4) de noodzaak voor een georganiseerde marxistische politieke macht om de vereiste revolutionaire ideologie te verschaffen, 5) het belang van sociale protestbewegingen van anderen dan arbeiders om de kapitalistische legitimiteit te ondermijnen, 6) de noodzaak voor een anti-kapitalistische hervormingsstrategie, 7) socialisme als arbeiderszelfbestuur in economie en staat. Kortom, een uiteenzetting over de werkelijke aard van de arbeidersklasse wordt gevolgd door een uiteenzetting over de eisen die aan een socialistische beweging gesteld moeten worden. Het is dit oorspronkelijke uitgangspunt dat ter discussie wordt gesteld in de Conclusie van deze studie.

In Deel 5 van de Inleiding worden de methoden en technieken van het onderzoek behandelt. Gesteld wordt dat een studie die van haar onderwerp veronderstelt dat

zij haar eigen geschiedenis maakt, ook een geëigende werkwijze, persoonlijke verhoudingen en resultaten vereist. Deze studie maakt in feite deel uit van een reeks activiteiten, waarvan verscheidene ten doel hebben om te worden teruggekoppeld naar arbeidersleiders, activisten en arbeiders zelf. Bij het behandelen van onderzoekstechnieken, wordt de waarde van een benadering van diverse methoden (antropologische, social survey, en historische technieken) uiteengezet voor de bestudering van de arbeidsproblematiek. Verklaard wordt hoe deze diverse methoden tijdens het onderzoek werden gebruikt, en welke pogingen werden gedaan om de gebruikelijke verhouding tussen onderzoeker en degenen die hij onderzoekt teboven te komen.

Deel I van de studie toont hoe kapitaal en staat proberen de arbeid in de haven van Lagos te vormen. Het eerste hoofdstuk gaat in op de historische ontwikkeling en de huidige structuur van de industrie, de arbeidsverhoudingen en de arbeidersklasse in Nigeria in het algemeen. Er worden drie perioden van industrialisatie onderscheiden, en vier verschillende sectoren van loonarbeid die momenteel bestaan. De geschiedenis en structuur van de loonarbeid wordt uiteengezet. Bedacht moet worden dat het gaat om arbeiders in een land waarin negen-tiende van de arbeidskrachten buiten loondienst werkt, waar twee-derde in de landbouw werkzaam is, waar driekwart van de stedelijke arbeiders buiten loondienst werkt, en waar twee-derde van de twee miljoen arbeiders in bedrijven met meer dan tien mensen in dienst van de staat zijn. Ook worden er twee belangrijke perioden onderscheiden in het nationale belied t.a.v. de arbeidsverhoudingen in Nigeria, n.l. een liberaal-paternalistische periode en een periode van een toenemend - hoewel vaag - corporatisme. Aangetoond wordt dat de ontwikkeling van de nationale vakbeweging voor een deel bepaald wordt door de eisen van een dergelijk beleid, en voor een deel door de ontwikkeling van de Nigeriaanse arbeidersklasse. Deze klasse - verdeeld door industriële en regionale verschillen - blijkt nauw te zijn verbonden met de kleine bourgeoisie op het platteland en in de steden, waaruit zij voortkomt en te midden waarvan zij leeft. Ondanks de ontwikkeling van een bepaald bewustzijn en gedrag dat kenmerkerd is voor de arbeidersklasse, en ondanks het vermogen om op lokaal niveau te komen tot effectief protest, wordt duidelijk waarom het totnogtoe onmogelijk is gebleken tot een klassebewust en representatief nationaal leiderschap te komen.

Het tweede hoofdstuk behandelt de structuur van de haven van Lagos zelf, in het bijzonder de indeling in twee belangrijke sectoren, en de verdeling binnen deze sectoren onderling. We zien hier dat arbeiders niet uitsluitend verdeeld zijn op grond van eigendom, maar ook door schaalfactoren (een grote NPA, vele kleine koppelbazen), en binnen iedere sector door een veelheid

van factoren die bedoeld zijn om hen binnen de afzonderlijke structuren in te passen. Ook wordt aangetoond dat de verdeling in sectoren historisch bepaald is en nog in verandering, waarbij deze veranderingen grotendeels de belangen van kapitaal en staat weergeven, of van fracties daarvan. Het derde hoofdstuk houdt zich bezig met de sociale achtergrond, huidige netwerk en levensomstandigheden van de twee belangrijksie categorieën arbeiders binnen iedere sector. Het wordt duidelijk dat we te maken hebben met twee verschillende werelden van loonarbeid, met belangrijke verschillen in inkomen en zekerheid, achtergrond en onderwijs, sociaale netwerk en levenskansen. Bewijs voor de kloof tussen NPA- en contractarbeiders is er te over, hoewel die ook binnen iedere groep te onderscheiden is. Er is eveneens een duidelijk verband te constateren tussen de levenswijze van de NPA-arbeiders die handenarbeid verrichten en de ervaren contractarbeiders.

In de conclusie van hoofdstuk 4 wordt betoogd dat, terwijl proletarisering tot een zekere homogeniteit onder de arbeiders leidt, er tegelijkertijd op nieuw een heterogenisering optreedt. De heterogeniteit in de haven houdt verdeelheid van velerlei aard onder de arbeiders in. De verdeling in rijke en arme arbeiders is er derhalve slechts één van een reeks verschillen die het Nigeriaanse kapitaal en de staat de Nigeriaanse arbeiders opleggen. De verdeling van de haven in twee belangrijke sectoren, voor wat betreft eigendom, schaal, technologie en zeggenschap over arbeid, bestaat stellig. Toch bestaat er in geen van beide een ondubbelzinnige verdeling tussen proletariërs en kapitalisten. Bovendien is ieder van de twee categorieën arbeiders onderling weer in sterke mate verdeeld in fracties, segmenten en strata. Gegeven verder de nauwe samenhang tussen contractarbeiders en arbeiders in vaste dienst - vergeleken met het hele scala van verschillen soorten arbeiders in steden in perifere kapitalistische landen - is de vraag of deze speciale verdeling de meest signifikante is, nauwelijks van zelfsprekend.

Deel II bestudeerd de bonden als de gangbare vorm van arbeidersorganisatie in de haven, met name de externe relaties van de bonden: de vakbondsstrategie t.o.v. kapitaal en staat. Kwam de aard van de verdeeldheid tussen de twee categorieën arbeiders al eerder aan de orde, dit deel betreft de implicaties hiervan voor respectievelijk de meer en minder geproletariseerde arbeiders. Binnen de NPA zien we verschillende vormen van vakbondslidmaatschap, en bonden die grotendeels gericht zijn op het bevoordelen van de eigen beroepsgroep binnen het kader van instituties en ideologieen t.a.v. collectieve onderhandelingen. Toenemende factiestrijd wordt hier echter niet slechts gezien als de uitdrukking van een steeds beperkter eigenbelang, maar ook als die van toenemende ontevredenheid met de bes-

taande vakbondsstrategie. Dit maakt het mogelijk - en stimuleert ook - een meer-aggresieve en meer-omvattende vakbondsstrategie te ontwikkelen, die een basis verschaft voor hernieuwde eenheid onder de arbeiders. De beperkingen van deze verandering worden aangetoond door het feit dat het veeleer de instituties t.a.v. de arbeidsverhoudingen zijn die ter discussie worden gesteld, dan de ideologie t.a.v. de arbeidsverhoudingen: dat het eerder de strategie is die verandert dan de eisen. De verschillende soorten situaties en niveau's binnen de sector van de koppelbazen houdt een grotere verscheidenheid in aan mogelijke organisatievormen en strategieën. Maar ook hier zien we een duidelijke beweging in de richting van een radicalisering. Zelfs de bond die het meest van de werkgevers afhankelijk is, laat zijn tanden zien. De gematigd-reformistische organisatie wordt voortdurend overvleugeld. De militante, niet-erkende organisatie is echter niet in staat om organisatorische vorm te geven aan het radicalisme dat zijzelf heeft opgeroepen. Hoe dubbelzinnig ook, het radicalisme van de NPA-arbeiders is in staat om de een of andere duidelijke organisatorische vorm aan te nemen, hetgeen het radicalisme van de contractarbeiders veel moeilijker weet te bereiken.

De interpretatie van dergelijke bevindingen kan in hoofdstuk 8 worden gevonden. De twee laatste paragrafen van dat hoofdstuk bevatten de belangrijkste conclusies. De ene betreft de aard van de arbeidersklasse, de ander de aard van de vakbeweging als vorm van arbeidersorganisatie. De eerste conclusie is dat er geen 'werkelijke' arbeidersklasse in Nigeria bestaat, waarvan de meer- of de minder-geproletariseerde arbeiders afwijkingen zijn; er is geen proletarische voorhoede (geen economisch gedetermineerde, natuurlijke voorhoede) die andere arbeiders zouden kunnen volgen. Men kan geen bepaald klassebewustzijn veronderstellen op basis van een bepaalde mate van proletarisering of een bepaalde mate van deprivatie. Voorzover er inderdaad een bepaalde vorm van bewustzijn ontstaat door een specifieke groepservaring, zal het radicalisme van die groep juist door die specificiteit beperkt worden. De tweede conclusie volgt uit deze eerste, door de vraag te stellen of de vakbonden dergelijk particularisme van de arbeiders niet versterken. Terwijl wordt aangetoond dat de bonden in de haven van Lagos een dergelijke verdeeldheid te boven zouden kunnen komen, wordt erkend dat de vakbondsorganisatie als vorm een dergelijk particularisme toelaat. Deze meer algemene vraag wordt opengelaten voor bespreking naderhand.

Deel III van de studie verschaft materiaal voor een nadere beschouwing van dit tweede thema. Het gaat over de interne verhoudingen in de vakbeweging, lokaal, nationaal en internationaal. Het bespreekt de aard van de vakbondsstructuren, de relaties van de leiders met de nationale en internationale beweging, en hun rela-

ties met de leden. De analyse (hoofdstuk 12) vat de bevindingen op dit punt samen, zij het in een andere volgorde. Eerst komt de relatie tussen arbeiders en leiders aan de orde. Niet alleen wordt hier gewezen op de uiteenlopende oriëntatie van de NPA-arbeiders op de werknemers uit de middenklasse en van de contractarbeiders op de kleine bourgeoisie, maar ook op hun gemeenschappelijke bewustzijn van hun positie als loonarbeiders. Dit gedeelde bewustzijn heeft geen betrekking op een nationale of een internationale arbeidersklasse (noch op elkaar), maar het loopt parallel met dat van andere arbeiders. Het loopt ook parallel met de houding van andere niet in loondienst werkende mensen in Nigeria, en kan derhalve worden beschouwd als een basis om tot gemeenschappelijke actie te komen. Onder de leiders kunnen we een proces van professionalisering en het gevaar van bureaucratisering waarnemen. Ook wordt gesuggereerd dat, waar de leiders falen om het bewustzijn en actie van de leden te stimuleren, ze zelf beschouwd kunnen worden als een groep die tussenliggende posities in de klassenstructuur inneemt in plaats van leidende posities binnen de arbeidersklasse. Met betrekking tot de vakbondsstructuur wordt een gezamenlijk proces in de richting van collectieve onderhandelingen geconstateerd, maar zonder de noodzakelijke gevolgen voor bureaucratisering. Er wordt echter gesteld dat, waar het tot collectieve onderhandelingen komt, die zowel als middel en als doel van vakbondsactiviteit worden aanvaard, de vakbonden conservatief worden, en actiestrijd en cliëntelisme zullen worden gestimuleerd. Deze argumentatie wordt voortgezet door de relaties na te gaan tussen de bonden in de haven van Lagos en hun nationale en internationale vakbondscontacten. Het is de conservatieve aard van dergelijke hogere organisaties, gebaseerd op oude compromissen met kapitaal en staat, dat hen ertoe voert cliëntelisme en factiestrijd binnen de bonden op havenniveau te bevorderen. De conclusie van dit hoofdstuk keert opnieuw terug naar het algemene probleem van de organisatievorm van de bonden en de verdeeldheid van de arbeidersklasse. Betoogd wordt dat we moeten erkennen dat kapitaal en staat (concurrentie en hiërarchie) binnen zowel als buiten of boven de vakbeweging opereren. Waar vakbondsleiders dat niet erkennen en er geen actie tegen ondernemen, zullen er hindernissen voor de versterking en consolidatie van de arbeidersklasse blijven bestaan. Er is geen bewijs dat zelfs de twee radicale groepen van leiders dit in woord of daad herkenden. Vakbonden zullen oude scheidslijnen blijven voortbrengen of nieuwe onder de arbeiders creeren, wanneer ze als gespecialiseerde structuren opgevat worden met een toegewezen rol in een bestaande sociale formatie. Indien ze opgevat worden als een beweging tegen het kapitalisme en etatisme van buitenaf, en tegen concurrentie en hierarchie van binnenuit, kunnen vakbonden bijdragen aan het overwinnen van scheidslijnen tussen de arbeiders.

Maar hebben de arbeiders het vermogen om zichzelf in en door hun bonden zo te manifesteren? Deel IV van de studie houdt zich met dit thema bezig. Aangezien de hoofdstukken 14 en 15 voornamelijk een chronologisch verslag geven van stakingsactiviteiten in iedere sector, kunnen we direct naar hoofdstuk 16 doorgaan. Dit behandelt het bewustzijn en het vermogen van de arbeiders om actie te ondernemen, het leiderschap van stakingen, en het probleem van eenheid onder de arbeiders. In de eerste plaats, het bewustzijn en vermogen tot actie. Hoewel de NPA-arbeiders gedurende deze periode hun onderlinge verdeeldheid te boven komen en militanter worden, wordt er betrekkelijk weinig gestaakt. Als er al gestaakt wordt, gebeurd dat zeer gematigd. De stakingen van de contractarbeiders zijn algemener, frekwenter en getuigen van een grotere strijdbaarheid, maar dat is niet zonder meer een bewijs voor een grotere mate van bewustzijn en vermogen om actie te ondernemen. In beide gevallen kan de staking worden gezien als een rationele en effectieve reaktie op de situatie van de desbetreffende groep. Terwijl echter het protest van de contractarbeiders hen voerde tot de status die de NPA-arbeiders genoten, bracht het protest van de NPA-arbeiders hen hier impliciet bovenuit. Niettemin staakte iedere groep doorgaans voor zichzelf, en gemeenschappelijk optreden tijdens nationale acties betekende gewoonlijk niet echt gezamenlijke actie. In de tweede plaats, het leiderschap van stakingen. Dit komt in beide gevallen in handen te liggen van radicale vakbondsleiders. Maar het is duidelijk dat in beide gevallen de motieven om te staken van deze leiders verschillen - of te scheiden zijn - van die van hun volgelingen. De niet geringe veschillen tussen beide groepen leiders schijnen op dit punt van minder betekenis dan hun overeenkomsten. Beide groepen reageren op verzoeken van de arbeiders om actie te ondernemen, beide stimuleren en leiden die, maar beide zijn ook in staat om acties, om eigen redenen, af te breken. Het is echter niet zo dat de stakingen totaal in de handen van de leiders liggen. Ten derde, het probleem van eenheid onder de arbeiders. Het is duidelijk dat we hier een groeiende strijdbaarheid zien, maar die vormt voornamelijk de uitdrukking van een tamelijk beperkt-gedefinieerd eigenbelang. Dit moet echter niet zonder meer als negatief worden gezien. Door de stakingen komen de twee voornaamste categorieën niet tegenover elkaar te staan. Ze komen ook niet in conflict met de belangen van andere Nigeriaanse arbeiders. De NPA- en contractarbeiders lijken bezig zichzelf te herdefiniëren, onderling collectief maar als groep afzonderlijk, op een beperkte maar krachtiger wijze. Het vraagstuk dat overblijft is om de definitie van de eigen situatie te verruimen en meer effectieve actie te ondernemen. Protestacties moeten meer fracties, segmenten en strata van de arbeidersklasse gaan omvatten, evenals nieuwe en bredere eisen. Maar zelfs deze 'normale' stakingen, die niet plaatsvinden in een

crisissituatie, tonen niettemin het vermogen van de arbeiders aan om zich tegenover kapitaal en staat en hun eigen leiders te manifesteren.

De Conclusie (Deel 2) vat het onderzoek samen en trekt daaruit conclusies. Het onderzoek weerlegt de veronderstellingen en beweringen van de arbeidersaristocratie-theorie. Het laat de tastbare verschillen en scheidslijnen tussen de twee soorten arbeiders zien, die echter geen conflict vormen. Het laat andere verschillen en scheidslijnen zien binnen iedere sector die evenzeer van belang lijken bij het belemmeren van de ontwikkeling van een klassebewustzijn, als die welke zich aftekenen tussen 'arbeidersaristocraten' en 'de halfgeproletariseerde boeren'. Verder brengt het onderzoek een gedetailleerde beschrijving van het politieke gedrag van ieder type arbeider, waar dat voordien slechts was voorspeld in economisch-deterministische termen. Het geeft verder aan dat arbeiders het vermogen hebben strijd te leveren tegen kapitaal en staat zonder hun eigen leiders - of zelfs tegen hen in. En tenslotte toont het aan dat vakbonden niet onveranderlijk en onvermijdelijk bemiddelen in de klassenstrijd, dat er een dialectische wisselwerking is tussen leiders en achterban, en dat arbeiders de bonden kunnen gebruiken om contrôle over hun eigen omgeving uit te breiden. Het probleem is, hoe de scheidslijnen, hierarchieën en oppositie, die spontaan de ontwikkeling van markt en staat vergezellen - of die bewust worden ingebracht en heringebracht door kapitalisten en bureaucraten - te onderkennen en te overwinnen.

Deel 3 van de Conclusie bespreekt de begrippen die gaandeweg zijn geïntroduceerd, en de wijze waarop zij zijn gebruikt. Eerst wordt betoogd dat de theorie van de arbeidersaristocratie de aard van de kapitalistische verdeling van de arbeidskracht uitdrukt/weerspiegelt/verduistert. Socialistische sociale analyse moet veeleer deze verdelingen doordringen/onthullen/teboven komen. Om deze taak uit te voeren, moest een aanzienlijk aantal nieuwe begrippen geïntroduceerd worden. Industriële differentiatie en uiteenlopend bewustzijn van arbeiders worden klaarblijkelijk bepaald door een verscheidenheid van krachten, in plaats van door één, en vereisen verscheidene instrumenten om te worden ontleed. Bovendien zijn deze verschillende begrippen eerder gebruikt in een complexe vorm van analyse, dan in een eenvoudige vorm die zich op een enkele factor concentreert. Derhalve keert hetgeen in Deel I is voorgesteld als een strategie van contrôle over arbeiders in Deel II terug als de socio-politieke en socio-economische contekst van vakbondsactiviteit. Scheidslijnen binnen de arbeiders klasse worden evenzo gepresenteerd als intern in Deel I (in termen van fractie, segment en stratum) en als extern in Deel III (in termen van relaties tussen de arbeidersklasse en de werknemers uit de middenklasse).

Deel 4 van de Conclusie is een hernieuwde reflectie op het oorspronkelijke theoretische uitgangspunt. Er wordt gewezen op de veranderingen die gedurende de analyse hebben plaatsgevonden. Teneinde meer verfijnde instrumenten te ontwikkelen voor bepaalde analyses in de diverse theoretische hoofdstukken, worden enkele van de aanvankelijk als leidraad gebruikte uiteenzettingen ter discussie gesteld. Derhalve worden 'economisch' en 'politiek' regelmatig tussen aanhalingstekens - die afstand scheppen - geplaatst. Het wordt noodzakelijk geacht om de anti-kapitalistische aard van 'economische' strijd te benadrukken, en om de betekenis voor de arbeidersklasse van 'politieke' strijd om de macht over de staat ter discussie te stellen. Ook wordt aangetoond dat zowel de communistische als de sociaaldemocratische leiders van de havenarbeiders van Lagos hun 'ideologie van de arbeidersklasse' moesten opgeven ten gunste van een of anders vorm van populisme, teneinde de arbeiders in beweging te kunnen krijgen. De oorspronkelijke veronderstelling van de in wezen revolutionaire aard van de arbeidersklasse kan niet worden aangetoond. In plaats daarvan is eenvoudig aangegeven hoe arbeidersprotest kan leiden tot een bredere en hoger ontwikkelde eigen identiteit. Het laten varen van de veronderstelling van een revolutionair proletariaat brengt ons dan weer naar de oorspronkelijke arbeidersaristocratie-theoretici - Marx, Engels en Lenin. Zij hadden de theorie nodig om te 'verklaren' hoe - in tegenstelling tot hun veronderstellingen en verwachtingen - het Engelse en Europese proletariaat niet revolutionair werd. Indien we, zoals het andere element in de marxistische traditie nadrukkelijk beweerd, de klassenstrijd beschouwen als de motor en niet als het gevolg van structurele verandering, dan is het aan de ene kant niet nodig de voorhoederol van het proletariaat te veronderstellen, en moeten we aan de andere kant iedere strijd van arbeiders serieuzer nemen. Hoewel Marx erkende dat 'communisme, de werkelijke beweging is die aan de huidige situatie een eind zal makeg, bedienden hij en zijn volgelingen zich ook van zulke economisch-deterministische termen als die van de arbeidersaristocratie. Met een dergelijk economisch determinisme hangen (soms op complexe wijze) proletarisme, voorhoedepretentie, intellectualisme, een etatistische opvatting van politiek, en een wereldbeeld in termen van elkaar uitsluitende tegenstellingen samen. Samengevat ligt het alternatief in het inzicht dat de sociale structuur wordt bepaald door politieke strijd; dat klassen worden gevormd en hervormd door strijd; dat strijd van de arbeiders een politieke stijd is; dat de vijanden kapitaal en staat zijn (en racisme en patriarchaat); dat het doel de overwinning van uitbuiting en overheersing in de hele samenleving is; dat dit alleen te verwezenlijken is door het verbinden van de autonome eisen van de verschillende soorten arbeiders, van de arbeidersklasse en andere 'werkende klassen', en van klasse- en algemeen democratische eisen.

Deel 5 van de Conclusie vergelijkt deze studie met andere recente studies over Afrikaanse arbeiders. Deze hebben gemeen dat ze een verschuiving laten zien die een welkome verbreding impliceert van het arbeidersaristocratiedebat, maar tevens een zeker gevaar inhoudt van het ter zijde stellen van kernthema's die door dat debat worden opgeworpen. Het nieuwe probleemgebied is dat van de verhouding tussen degenen die goed zijn geintegreerd in de loonarbeid en andere werkende mensen, uit dezelfde omgeving, of die anders geplaatst zijn op de as loonarbeiders-eigen bazen, of allen halfgeproletariseerd maar toch verschillend. Hier is van belang het inzicht in de mate van halfproletarisering, kritiek op het westerse type vakbond dat drijft op collectieve onderhandelingen, en de impliciete vraag naar organisatievorm en strategieën die aansluiten bij de aard van de arbeid voor het kapitaal in Afrika. Het gevaar is dat de centrale plaats van de conflicten op de werkplek, die zowel in onafhankelijk als racistisch Afrika de kern van de anti-kapitalistische strijd blijft bepalen, uit het oog verloren wordt. Een andere tekortkoming van de nieuwe invalshoek is het ontbreken van een vergelijkend perspectief: de crisis van de traditionele vakbeweging is internationaal, en raakt geindustrialiseerde-kapitalistische en communistische landen evenzeer als Afrikaanse landen. Een derde tekortkoming is het algemene gemis aan inzicht om de aangeduide problemen te zien als een strategieprobleem van de arbiedersbeweging, en zich er rechtstreeks mee bezig te houden.

Deel 6 van de Conclusie erkent dat het zich richten tot de bestaande vakbeweging op zichzelf problematisch is. In de eerste plaats is er de noodzaak om de vakbeweging te laten zien dat verdeeldheid niet zomaar een probleem is (d.w.z. te isoleren en op te lossen binnen een overigens onveranderde omgeving of structuur). Men moet aantonen dat het het probleem is, dat verdeeldheid een uitdrukking is van de onderdrukking van de werkende mensen door het kapitaal en de staat. Als dit kan worden overgedragen, dan kan en moet het overige aan de Nigeriaanse socialisten en vakbondsmensen worden overgelaten. Maar dan moet het wel duidelijk zijn wie zich richt tot wie, en hoe dat gebeurt. Deze studie richt zich tot de collega's van de schrijver, met het doel om hun erkenning te verkrijgen. Het richt zich echter ook bewust tot een nieuwe generatie van intellectuelen in Nigeria en elders in de derde wereld. En wat hen geboden wordt, is, eerlijk gezegd, een benadering die grotendeels gebaseerd is op Europese en Amerikaanse theorievorming. Maar dit moet gezien worden als theorievorming, ontleend aan de strijd van socialistische intellectuelen om de arbeidersbeweging en werkende mensen daar te verstaan. De schrijver hoopt dat het niet alleen de ervaring van een land of een groep van landen weerspiegelt maar de ervaring van proletarisering en klassevorming van de arbeiders op

wereldschaal. Indien het van betekenis blijkt te zijn voor de arbeiders- en socialistische beweging in Afrika, kan dat een indicatie zijn dat de voorwaarden voor de ontwikkeling van een gemeenschappelijke theorie en strategie voor een werkelijk internationale arbeidersbeweging uiteindelijk tot standkomen.

# CURRICULUM VITAE

Peter Waterman was born in London on January 26, 1936. He completed his secondary education in 1954. He took a Diploma in Journalism at Regent Street Polytechnic, London (1954-55), and then worked as a journalist for the International Union of Students in Prague (1955-57). Following military service (1958-60), he worked as a technical journalist in London (1960-61). From 1961 to 1966 he studied in Oxford. He took a Diploma in Social and Economic Studies at Ruskin College (1961-63) and then - after one year as a truck driver - a B.A. Honours Degree in Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Oxford University. From 1966 to 1969 he was responsible for trade union education in English-speaking Africa for the World Federation of Trade Unions in Prague. He then returned to England, where he took a Master's degree in West African Studies at the University of Birmingham. From 1970 to 1972 he was a lecturer on world contemporary history at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria. Since 1972 he has been a lecturer and researcher at the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, Netherlands. Here he has specialised on workers and unions in the third world. The research on which this dissertation is based was completed in 1979. It has given rise to a book, articles, a tape-and-slide show and a set of microfiched documents. The dissertation was given definitive form in 1981-82. Peter Waterman is a Consulting Editor of Labour, Capital and Society (McGill University, Montreal), and Editor of the Newsletter of International Labour Studies (The Hague).

# STELLINGEN

1. Past critics of labour aristocracy theory in Africa have failed to go far enough: underlying the theory are fundamental methodological errors and conservative political implications.

2. There is a process of proletarianisation in Lagos Port - the removal of labourers' control over capital, means of production and the labour power of others - but this is obscured from the labourers by 1) the absence of the classical worker-capitalist relationship, and 2) the heterogenisation of port labour in terms of industrial sectors, ownership patterns, wage/skill and employment-status hierarchies, and of labour control strategies.

3. One cannot assume, on the basis of the extent-of-proletarianisation or extent-of-deprivation of worker categories, a certain class consciousness: insofar as a certain level of class consciousness is premised on the experience of a particular category of workers, the radicalism of this group is going to be also circumscribed by that particularity.

4. Capital and state (competition and hierarchy) operate inside as well as outside or above the trade union movement: insofar as union leaders do not recognise and take action against this, obstacles to the expansion and consolidation of a working class will remain, factionalism and clientalism will be stimulated.

5. Strikes in the Lagos Port case show the two major worker fractions to have been redefining themselves collectively but separately: whilst even such strikes, under non-crisis conditions, show the capacity of workers to impose themselves on capital, state and their own union leaderships, effective self-defence requires that such protest actions include wider groups of workers, and express new and broader demands.

6. Labour aristocracy theory represents neither a distortion of, nor a deviation from, classical Marxism-Leninism: it is a revealing expression of a major trend or tradition within it, a trend that must be analysed, criticised and surpassed if Marxism is to release its emancipatory potential.

7. Amongst the principles for a re-birth of working-class internationalism are that it should 1) imply direct contact between involved workers at shopfloor level, 2) require the personal activity or sacrifice of those involved, 3) disregard political, religious or ideological identifications, 4) deal with immediate and daily-life problems of the workers, 5) increase their independence from capital, state and patriarchy, 6) involve also the solidarity of the weaker with the stronger workers, 7) take up also broader democratic or popular demands. (C.f. Pieter de Vries, 'Shopfloor International', De Rijp, DIAS, 1982; and Nigel Haworth and Harvie Ramsay 'Grasping the Nettle: Problems in the Theory

of International Labour Solidarity', Paper to BSA Conference, Swansea, April, 1983).

8. The development of a new international labour studies should not be seen as merely a matter of a new problem area or theoretical approach but of a new total practice by labour researchers requiring, amongst other things, that 1) research be carried out with and for workers, or at least in dialogue with them, 2) it create research capacities amongst them, 3) it be published or produced in forms accessible to them, and 4) it reinforce internationalism amongst them. (C.f. Robin Cohen, 'The "New" International Labour Studies: A Definition', Working Paper 27, CDAS, McGill University, Montreal, 1981.).

9. Comicbook introductions to Marxism, Freud, capitalism, nuclear energy, etc., should not be dismissed as simplifications: they can demystify and humanise revolutionary figures or complex ideas and problems that have previously overawed or been used to manipulate the non-expert: they should be judged seriously for the information they carry, their interpretations, their aesthetic qualities, their capacity to communicate and the attitudes they create. (C.f. Richard Appignanesi (ed.), Beginners for Beginners Series, Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, London).

10. In arguing against permitting peasants to join Solidarnosc, the Polish state rightly cited Marxist definitions of the working class and the Leninist requirement of separate worker and peasant organisations. By struggling successfully to join Solidarnosc, the Polish peasants were not only potentially establishing a new organisational relationship between workers and peasants but re-defining the concept 'working class' in a more modern, broader, more emancipatory - and therefore more scientific - sense.

11. However original, competent and subversive of earlier such works it might be, the study of Indian industrial labour by the Ramaswamys is undermined by a definition of 'industry' so narrow that it excludes the vast majority of Indian wage-earners, and by a focus on the problems of capitalists, bureaucrats - and industrial sociologists - rather than those of labourers. (E.A. and U. Ramaswamy, Industry and Labour: An Introduction. New Delhi:OUP. 1981).

12. Writing of American universities in the 1970s, Aronowitz argues that: 1) critical theory has been degraded into technical intelligence; 2) universities are increasingly financially dependent on the provision of contract advice for social management and administration; 3) desirous of creating peace and social justice, academics are nonetheless becoming technocrats, providing essential services to corporations and state, and thus occupying a crucial position in the power hierarchy. This is true not only in the US, not only of universities, and not only in the 1970s. (S. Aronowitz, False Promises: The Shaping of American Working Class Consciousness. New York: McGraw Hill. 1973).

This is an attempt to both refute and surpass the 'labour aristocracy' thesis - the notion that in Africa the 'proper proletariat' of industrial workers is economically privileged above, socially isolated from and politically opposed to the 'semi-proletarianised peasantry' of casual and migrant labourers. The refutation and surpassing is both empirical and theoretical.

The case considered is that of the Lagos cargo-handling industry in the 1970s. Within this industry, and on one site, one could find clear economic and social divisions between the 'rich' workers regularly employed by the state-owned Nigerian Ports Authority and the 'poor' ones employed casually by the private dock labour contractors. The NPA workers, moreover, appeared to be well incorporated into their corporation, the contract workers to be rebelling against the contractors. The first appearance was an illustration of the labour aristocracy thesis.

The study rejects the thesis, however, not only by going beyond such first appearances, but by questioning the key concepts employed in labour aristocracy analysis, its underlying methodology and its political implications. At the beginning of the work it is assumed that labour aristocracy theory is a deviation from the marxist tradition. At the end questions are raised about this tradition itself.

The case study permits detailed examination of the political relations between the two worker types and amongst each of them. Attention is paid to 1) union relations with capital and state, 2) follower relations with leaders (industrial, national and international), and 3) collective worker protest action. The purpose is not to deny the existence of political divisions between differentially proletarianised workers but to see this particular one as only one of many amongst a working-class-in-the-making.

The work represents a continuation of the author's already published history of Lagos Port unionism in the 1940s-60s.

Front cover: Top left: A skilled tradesman in the Engineering Department of the Nigerian Ports Authority. Bottom right: An unskilled migrant jetty labourer. (Author's photos and design).